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FOREWORD

Papers in Illinois History, 1940, is the fourth volume published by the Illinois State Historical Society under this title. Prior to 1937 the corresponding publication was entitled *Transactions of the Illinois State Historical Society.*

Of the papers published in the volume, all except "The Great Chicago Fire, October 8-10, 1871," by H. A. Musham, were read at the Society's annual meeting at Carbondale, May 9 and 10, 1940. "The Great Chicago Fire" is presented as a deserving contribution to Illinois history.

Occasional misunderstandings make advisable the following statement of editorial policy: The staff of the Illinois State Historical Society takes every possible precaution to insure accuracy and objectivity, but contributors, rather than the Society, must be held responsible for matters of fact and points of view.

PAUL M. ANGLE, *Editor.*

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RIVERS THAT MEET IN EGYPT

By BARBARA BURR HUBBS*

The State of Illinois has the shape of a great vase with the rivers that meet in Egypt outlining its base. Into the bottom of that vase poured the first tides of American settlement. The rivers bore the arks and flatboats of those early homeseekers. Westward and northward these people floated and poled their way until the foundations for statehood were erected. Then the vase filled to the brim.

The rivers that meet in Egypt bore upon their unmapped waters the canoes of French explorers who first recorded the marvels of the Illinois Country. LaSalle passed that way in February, 1682 on his way to discover the mouth of the Mississippi and to take possession of the river valley for France. Jolliet and Marquette were the first Europeans to see the Upper Mississippi as it rolls along beside the Illinois bluffs and swallows in its murky flood the clear waters of the Ohio. Father Marquette's account of their 1673 trip furnishes our first description of many southern Illinois landmarks.

One such landmark is Tower Rock, which rises a sheer 100 feet out of the waters of the Mississippi and gives the name to the picturesque river town of Grand Tower, Illinois. Tower Rock, near the Missouri shore, is the highest of a chain of similar rock formations that span the Mississippi at this point. The others may be seen only at low water. Geologists tell us that a mighty waterfall, possibly as great as Niagara, once thundered in this

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* Author of *Pioneer Folks and Places; an Historic Gazetteer of Williamson County, Illinois,* published in 1939.

quiet spot. At that time, ages ago, the Mississippi used a channel several miles to the east where the Big Muddy River now flows. The fertile bottom lands were part of the broad river bed. Some great upheaval caused the Mississippi to seek its present channel, the only one known to man. Tower Rock remains as a sentinel from that older time.

Father Marquette had been warned that the rock was the home of a demon who devoured all passers-by. The good priest commented with a slightly superior air that "Indians fear everything." But even he was impressed with the whirlpool around the rock and its tumbling, roaring waters. Mark Twain mentioned the disposition of later inhabitants to ascribe ownership of the locality to His Satanic Majesty. The Devil's Bake Oven and the Devil's Back Bone are still pointed out among the bluffs.

The evil manitou of the Indians was replaced by a stately cross in 1698, when three missionaries from the Seminary of Quebec were guided down the Mississippi by Henri de Tonti. Suitable ceremonies accompanied this Christian gesture, and the glorious hymn *Vexilla Regis* ("Banners of the King") rang out across the quiet waters. Then the soldiers of the party fired three volleys of musketry that echoed from bluff to bluff. As long as that cross stood, its island base was known as the Rock of the Cross. Then the French began calling it La Tour, which English and Americans translated as Tower Rock. During the administration of President Grant the rock was made a government reservation to protect it from quarrymen and to preserve it as a possible natural pier for a bridge across the Mississippi. Therefore it is called the smallest national park.

The Seminary fathers, Montigny, St. Cosmé, and Davion, spent two days and nights with Tonti near Tower Rock. They camped under the bluff on the Illinois shore which they recognized as Cape St. Anthony because a party of traders had once spent that saint's day in the same spot. Pitch was secured and the boats were caulked. Father St. Cosmé wrote in his journal that he saw no other pine trees between Chicago and the Arkansas

River. Pine trees still grow on Big Hill—the name given by American pioneers to the bluffs called Cape St. Anthony by the French. So do the canes and sweet gum trees which St. Cosmé described. The fruits he found still hanging on the trees in December were undoubtedly the persimmon and the pawpaw.

St. Cosmé was told of fourteen Miami Indians whose canoes were engulfed near Tower Rock at some flood season, and of the sacrifices made by later travelers to avoid a like fate. Indian legends cluster around the rock. I have heard tales from Henry Clay Crow, a retired river man who has called Grand Tower his home since the spring of 1867. He rode into the town on the first passenger train to run from Carbondale over the railroad that is still affectionately known as the "Granny," now part of the Illinois Central System.

There is a romantic tale of a pair of Indian lovers not permitted to marry, but united by the maiden's voluntary death. She leaped into the whirlpool when her lover Swift Wind was sent to his death there by her father and the tribal leaders. Another tribe, who lived on the Missouri shore, executed their prisoners of war by binding the captives in canoes that were set adrift in the current leading to the whirlpool. The spirits of the drowned are said to haunt Tower Rock; their cries, to be heard above the waters.

A massacre of American settlers occurred about 1780 along the Illinois shore where the Mississippi channel narrows because of its bordering bluffs. The migrants were on their way from the Monongahela River to the American Bottom, and the crew went ashore to pull their keelboat upstream against the rapid current. The fifteen or twenty women and children in the party, tired of their confinement on the long trip, went ashore to stretch their legs. Where the bluffs come close to the river, Indians attacked the disorganized Americans, most of whom were killed before their boat could draw offshore.

One young man hid in the rocks, where he was forced to witness the horrible mangling of his mother's body, a scene that

recalled the scalping of his father in the East. With vengeance in his heart, the youth made his way overland to Kaskaskia and organized a pursuit party. Two years were spent trailing that Indian band, then another sudden attack evened the score. John Moredock was always conspicuous in expeditions against the Indians, and became a major in the St. Clair County Militia. He was also elected a delegate to the Vincennes convention called by Governor Harrison in 1802, and was a member of two Illinois territorial legislatures.

As the first French explorers passed down the Mississippi below Tower Rock, they regarded with amazement the confluence of the two great rivers and speculated upon the country to the east from which the beautiful Ohio flowed. Both Marquette's and St. Cosmé's journals dwelt on the marvelous expanse of waters, but neither recorded any vision of the future. It was the Jesuit Charlevoix, sent by the French government to survey its Mississippi empire, who observed in 1721:

> There is not, in my opinion, a place in all Louisiana more proper for a settlement than this, nor where it is of greater importance for us to have one. The whole country watered by the Ouabache and Ohio . . . is extremely fruitful consisting of vast meadows, which feed thousands of buffaloes. Besides its communication with Canada is as easy as that by the river of the Illinois, and the passage much shorter. A fort with a good garrison would keep the Indians in awe.

He was speaking of the Point at Cairo, where two rivers and three states meet.

Almost a hundred years passed before any real effort was made to fulfill this suggestion by Charlevoix. The French flag with its lilies was withdrawn from the Mississippi, the British flag waved there briefly, George Rogers Clark captured the Illinois Country for Virginia, and the United States acquired title to the spot so fit for a settlement. Territorial days were almost over for Illinois when John G. Comegys purchased at the Kaskaskia land office 1,800 acres on the delta between the Ohio and

Mississippi rivers and extending almost to their confluence.

John Gleaves Comegys was a native of Maryland and one of a Baltimore merchant firm. In 1809 he established a branch in St. Louis and that summer he witnessed an Indian treaty made in the name of Governor Meriwether Lewis. Comegys' purchase of Illinois lands was made July 26 and 28, 1817. At the next meeting of the territorial legislature the "City and Bank of Cairo" was incorporated, January 9, 1818. Comegys secured as fellow-incorporators Shadrach Bond, who became the first governor of Illinois before the year was ended, and three other officers of the Kaskaskia land office: Edward Humphreys, Michael Jones, and Warren Brown. Within a week these incorporators made a deed of trust in favor of two Kaskaskia lawyers, Elias Kent Kane and Henry S. Dodge. This was to facilitate immediate development of the privileges granted under the charter. Nothing was done, however, beyond surveying the site and drawing up an elaborate plat of a future city. This plat, printed in Baltimore, shows streets named for every man concerned save the modest Comegys. He planned a visit to Holland where he would employ experienced builders of dikes and levees, but death intervened. John G. Comegys died on February 5, 1819 and the final payment on the lands of the City and Bank of Cairo was not made. Ownership reverted to the government and the first payments were forfeited.

The elaborate plans for a commercial metropolis fed by the inland waterways dissolved into thin air. Only a name remained. The incorporators of 1818 found in the glories of antiquity a parallel for their dreams: the Nile was the great river of the ancient world and Cairo was the storehouse of its valley's wealth. In Illinois two great rivers converged, traffic for North and West would meet that from the East and from the South. Their city would be the crossroads of the nation, and they named it Cairo.[1]

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[1] Miles A. Gilbert (1810-1901) settled at Kaskaskia as a merchant in 1832, married a daughter of Senator David J. Baker, and joined Judge Sidney Breese and Thomas Swanwick in buying from the government the lands which are now the site of Cairo, Illinois. Mr. Gilbert was a partner

For twenty years Cairo remained a city on paper. Other promoters took a leaf from Comegys' book. About six miles above the confluence of the two great rivers, a small stream empties into the Ohio. A good landing at the mouth of this, the Cache River, made it possible to transship freight between boats on the Mississippi and Ohio rivers. Warehouses and a tavern were built about 1822, when the Cache River was considered navigable for about sixty miles into the Illinois Country during some six months of the year. This commercial depot in the wilderness was named Trinity, for the three states which it shadowed.

Navigation of the Cache was jealously guarded. Rights to build a mill dam "on the River Cash" were granted by the first Illinois General Assembly to William M. Alexander three weeks after the state's southernmost county was named for him. But any boatman who found that milldam an obstruction could secure an order to remove it. Dr. Alexander also planned a canal to connect the waters of the Mississippi and the Ohio a few miles above the Point. This canal would have followed in part the course of the Cache River. It was this watercourse, filled with backwater from the Ohio, that practically cut off Cairo during the flood of 1937.

Tradition has it that the Cache was named by a French missionary who traveled through its cypress swamps early in the eighteenth century. Drift had covered the channel so completely

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of the Cairo City and Canal Company, incorporated in 1837, and for a number of years the resident trustee of their property.

A question on the difference of pronunciation between Cairo (Care-oh), Illinois and Cairo, Egypt brought from Mr. Gilbert the definite statement that the one was not named for the other. Instead, he said that the incorporators of the 1818 City and Bank of Cairo honored a certain Dr. Cairo, whom Mr. Gilbert never met and of whose life he knew nothing. This conversation is remembered by Mr. Gilbert's grandson, then a university student, now Attorney Barry Gilbert of Chicago. Presumably Mr. Gilbert learned of Dr. Cairo from older Kaskaskians. Sidney Breese was a clerk in the law office of Elias Kent Kane when the 1818 papers were drawn.

Considerable search has failed to produce any record of Dr. Cairo. Certainly he was not a resident near the mouth of the Ohio. If he was an associate of John G. Comegys, Dr. Cairo may have lived anywhere between Baltimore and St. Louis. Any clue to his existence will be gratefully received.

at one ford that the party walked over the river where they could hear the water trickling below their feet. The Frenchman exclaimed, *"L'eau est cache!"* (The water is hidden.) Americans misinterpreted the name and spelled it Cash during the early years of their settlement. But Father Mermet's informal naming was later restored, many years after the winter he spent as chaplain at Juchereau's tannery on the Ohio River.

Charles Juchereau de St. Denis, the first royal judge of Montreal, was permitted to establish tanneries in the wilderness—his permission granted in a royal patent signed by Louis XIV in 1701. One tannery was at Michillimackinac, the second on the Ohio River just above its mouth. The one named Va Bache stood at the head of Chain of Rocks, one of the most beautiful stretches of the Ohio. Its outposts were scattered within a hundred mile radius, and its hunters ranged the great forest that is now divided among three states. Its life was too short for much impress to be made locally, but its story is recorded in the *Jesuit Relations*. Thousands of buffalo robes were stored, a fortune awaiting shipment, when Indians attacked and massacred the French hunters. Juchereau escaped to Kaskaskia, where he died a short time later.

The French abandoned the neighborhood of the Ohio's mouth and concentrated their commercial and military efforts for the Lower Ohio near the present Metropolis. Here Fort Ascension, later known as Fort Massac, was built. To this post came the French grenadiers retreating from the capture of Fort Duquesne at the head of the Ohio. But the chapter that brightens the story of Fort Massac is the landing nearby of George Rogers Clark and his company of Virginia militia. On Massac Creek was the first camp of their march to capture Kaskaskia and the Old Northwest. General Anthony Wayne verified the United States title to Fort Massac when he prepared the Indian treaty of Greenville in 1795 and secured ownership of Chicago.

The men of Kentucky and Tennessee followed Colonel Clark, using the Ohio River as a highway in their search for new homes and markets. "Landings" multiplied. A settler's cabin on some

shelving bank or at an inlet of some smaller stream would serve as tavern for the boatmen. Ambition would prompt an honest proprietor of such a resting place to provide a warehouse, or a ferry, perhaps eventually a woodyard when steamboats became frequent visitors.

Such a stop grew naturally where the bayous spread out from the mouth of the Cache River. But the proprietor was over ambitious, and far from honest. His real name is said to have been Fluger, and his origin, New Hampshire. As "Colonel Plug," the wrecker of the Cache River, he became infamous to the rivermen.

A flatboat loaded with produce from the farms along the Upper Ohio would escape the snags and sawyers of the river and the more dangerous outlaws of Cave-in-Rock only to fall into the clutches of Colonel Plug and his lieutenant, Nine-Eyes. The crew would be invited ashore for refreshment and a game of cards. The deserted boat would be quietly boarded, a plank would be loosened or a few holes bored below water level. When the sinking boat was discovered, Colonel Plug's men would row helpfully to the wreck, load their skiffs with whatever could be saved, and hurry to shore. But those rowboats had a way of disappearing into the swamps up the Cache River with their rescued cargoes. The lawful owners protested only at the risk of even rougher treatment.

One such crew of a Kentucky boat took a revenge on Colonel Plug that makes one of the tall tales of the rivers. They swallowed their losses with good grace one year, but the next season a counterattack was planned. Just before the boatwrecker's headquarters was reached, the Kentucky boat's crew divided and the greater number went ashore to hide until dark. The captain proceeded, and answered eagerly the hail from Colonel Plug that was an invitation to rest and refresh. A card game was scarcely begun, when the woods resounded with the yells of attacking Kentuckians. The surprise and uncertainty soon put his cohorts to rout and Colonel Plug was forced to surrender. His captors

stripped him to the skin and bound him to a sapling. Each in turn applied a cowhide until full payment for the preceding year's losses was exacted from the villain's tender back. Then he was left to the mercies of the mosquitoes.

Colonel Plug died with his boots on, in full exercise of his professional abilities. He was digging the caulking from a guest's boat when a sudden windstorm roughened the river and broke the line making the boat fast. The boat sank rapidly. The boat-wrecker's efforts to reach shore were as vain as his shouts, lost in the wind. Colonel Plug sank to a fitting end.

The ghost of his reputation haunted the scene of his villainies as late as 1826, when an honorable colonel of the Illinois militia took control of the depot called Trinity at the mouth of the Cache River. Colonel Henry L. Webb wrote in his diary: "The town then had a bad name. . . . Previous to my taking charge it had become known as a resort for gamblers, thieves, and all kinds of rascals." Colonel Webb had just completed the first of two terms in the legislature, where he prepared the address of welcome presented to General Lafayette when that hero visited Illinois. Webb and his fellow legislator, William S. Hamilton, were appointed aides to the great Frenchman who had known their fathers as revolutionary generals.

Under Colonel Webb's direction and the increasing river traffic, the landing at the mouth of the Cache River grew rapidly in importance. At low water, or in winter, Trinity was the head of navigation for the Mississippi, just as Cairo became later. Steamboats that could not continue upriver landed at Trinity, reshipped or stored their freight, and took on a southbound load from the warehouses. Passengers bought horses and continued their journeys by land, or engaged smaller boats.

Colonel Webb made elaborate provision for the entertainment of the travelers and boatmen who came his way. He even built a billiard room, although it was used for storage of buffalo robes as much as for the game. But the boatman's revenge followed the honorable colonel as tragically as it did the infamous

one. On New Year's Eve, 1831, Trinity was burned: tavern, store, warehouses, and the Webb home. A drifting trader tried to sell his whiskey to the workers at Trinity and was driven off. He returned with darkness and destroyed everything. Only the billiard room, standing at some distance from the other buildings, escaped. Colonel Webb did not attempt to rebuild Trinity, since he was called into service for the Black Hawk War a few months after the fire.

The plans for a commercial metropolis at the mouth of the Ohio were dusted off in 1835. Another group of Kaskaskians under the leadership of another eastern capitalist made the second purchase from the government of the lands at the junction of the rivers. These city builders were Sidney Breese, Thomas Swanwick, Miles A. Gilbert, David J. Baker, all Illinoisans, and Darius B. Holbrook of Boston. This second city met with every vicissitude—even the mordant pen of Charles Dickens was raised against it. In *Martin Chuzzlewit,* Cairo is sarcastically portrayed as Eden. Dickens' *American Notes* gives this description: "A place, without one single quality, in earth or air or water, to commend it; such is this dismal Cairo." But Cairo survived. Not even high water can daunt the will of its people to live at the mouth of the Ohio.

Cairo and the steamboat developed side by side. December, 1811, is memorable in the annals of both. The first steamboat chugged past the Point while land and rivers cracked and trembled in the worst throes of the New Madrid earthquake. The floodwaters were so high that canoes manned by Indian warriors floated among great trees. The upheaval was so great that the current of each river turned back upon itself during the shocks. The "b'iling water boat" and the "great shakes," as the pioneers called these inexplicable terrors, by coincidence chose the same time to appear. But it could not be accepted as coincidence by the few residents around the mouth of the Ohio.

Great were the portents thereof in the minds of backwoodsmen and Indians. Canoe, flatboat, keelboat had passed over smil-

ing waters. The fireboat came, and the earth went into convulsions. Perhaps the hissing steam rising from the river came from the fiery comet that had suddenly disappeared from the skies? It could have fallen into the broad Ohio and left only this smoking wake. Perhaps the devil himself had taken to the river with awful shrieks? Passage of the first steamboat on the western waters was in itself amazing beyond words. When it was combined with the violent earthquake, the pioneers around the mouth of the Ohio could only tremble before what they thought must be the approach of judgment day.

The steamboat *New Orleans* was indeed a portent of a new world. Population, industry, commerce increased by leaps and bounds in her wake. To the captain or passenger on the palatial packet that succeeded her in so few years, the *New Orleans* was a modest craft. Accounts of her structure vary; her capacity is given at figures between 100 and 400 tons. Her cost was $38,000. Eight miles an hour was her average speed, going downriver under full steam. The trip from Pittsburgh to New Orleans was made in fourteen days, actual traveling time. She had a paddle wheel and two masts, for sails seemed a necessary economy to her builders.

Those builders were Robert Fulton, Chancellor Robert R. Livingston, and Nicholas J. Roosevelt. The first two supplied the capital, the third supervised building of boat and engine at Pittsburgh. Mr. and Mrs. Roosevelt took a flatboat trip in 1809 to study the western rivers. Two years later, with their great Newfoundland dog, Tiger, they retraced the route down the Ohio and Lower Mississippi aboard the *New Orleans*.

At Natchez, Nicholas Roosevelt was acclaimed, through his steamboat, "the master of the Mississippi." He belonged to the New York family and began his study of boats during his boyhood on the Hudson. President Theodore Roosevelt's great-grandfather was his older brother; President Franklin D. Roosevelt's great-grandfather, his cousin.

There was a steady river trade from the time the French

settlements were established along the Mississippi early in the eighteenth century. New Orleans was the destination for this commerce, produce of the new Illinois country finding a market there in exchange for imported luxuries. Constantin Volney, the French philosopher, spoke somewhat complainingly of his compatriots' wasting their time in "journies to town to see their friends." He referred to New Orleans, hundreds of miles down the river.

Trade between Kaskaskia and New Orleans meant a three months' voyage, usually in convoys for mutual safety. The Chickasaw Indians were the greatest menace, though storms and sawyers took their toll. The French used *bateaux* of about forty tons burden and manned by sixteen or eighteen men. These flat-bottomed boats were propelled by long sweeps, with a shorter one for rudder. Downriver cargo included flour, beer, wine of the native grapes, hams, buffalo meat and tongues, deer's tallow, bear's oil, lead, and peltry. The famine of 1746 in New Orleans was alleviated by 800,000 weight of flour sent from the Illinois. So much, and such excellent, wine was made from the wild grapes of the Illinois that it was sent to France until further export was forbidden by royal decree, lest it might injure the sale of that staple product of the kingdom.

Freight rates were necessarily high for such a hazardous voyage. A bill of lading signed at Kaskaskia in 1741 provided for an iron kettle weighing 200 pounds, to be brought from New Orleans. Agreed payment for this freight consisted of 1 steer, 3 bushels of salt, 200 pounds of bacon, and 20 bushels of Indian corn.

The canoes and *bateaux* of the French gave way to the flatboats and keelboats of the Americans. The flatboat was merely a box, sometimes just a wagon bed set afloat until time came to mount it on wheels again. The commercial flatboat was used only on a downriver trip and was broken up for lumber or firewood at its destination. Its crew made their way home overland, since the facilities for traveling upstream by keelboat were slow,

expensive and marked by continuous hardship.

This necessity of returning by land from a trip to the river markets gave rise to another traffic. A boatload of horses found a ready market among the boatmen who had disposed of their own cargoes profitably. John Logan of Jackson County, Illinois, made his first business ventures in that way. His family, at their home in Ohio, always raised fine horses. The first boatload sold so well at the crowded landings downriver that John Logan followed the trade for five years. Some doctor interested him in studying medicine at Natchez and his search for a practice led him up the Mississippi. Thus the Logan family moved from Ohio to Missouri and then to Illinois, where John A. Logan was born to the doctor who had begun as a river horse-trader.

Sometimes the flatboat became a floating fort with a hull of square oaken timbers rising three or four feet above the water. Upright timbers set on top of the hull and enclosed by heavy planks made the fort impervious to rifle fire. A roof, loopholes, and a barricaded door were further safeguards to passengers and crew traveling along shores infested with hostile Indians.

The keelboat could both ascend and descend the rivers. Its name came from the heavy timber running from stem to stern, which served as a shock absorber when the boat struck a snag or hidden rock. Its long slender prow met less resistance from the current than the blunt-nosed arks and flatboats. A narrow gangway along each side gave footing for the boatmen to pole or warp their way upstream. Warping or cordeling was accomplished by pulling the boat along, hand over hand, with ropes attached to some tree or rock upstream. The cordelle was a line as much as 1,000 feet long, fastened to the top of a mast. There were no towpaths, and sometimes the boatmen propelled their craft by pulling in the fastened line. Except for the occasional help of a favorable wind, sheer man power provided the steam for these weary trips.

Often a day's hard work meant an advance of only two to four miles; ten miles marked an excellent day. Three or four

months was the average time for the trip from New Orleans to Louisville. A start around March 1, at high water, might bring the keelboat to its journey's end around July 1, or sudden low water might delay the trip until September. A trip upriver paid wages of $100 a man, while the freight rate was $5.00 for each 100 pounds. These figures were recorded by a bowman on many such trips, Colonel John S. Hacker of Jonesboro. His grandson of the same name, also a river man, still lives in Cairo. Ordinarily it was the village merchant who built a flatboat, bought the farmers' and hunters' surpluses, and sent a load on the hazardous trip to New Orleans. The profits were great when luck attended the venture. A return shipment of sugar and coffee with perhaps a small bag of spices would add to the profits. The sugar was bright yellow, and the coffee of course green.

These river trips could be disastrous speculations. One such country merchant, whose crossroads store stood on the banks of the Big Muddy River at Blairsville in Williamson County, traded with his pioneer customers until he had a load of hoop poles. At flood water he sent them off to New Orleans, with visions of the profitable return that would soon be in his pocket. The flatboat struck a snag and sank, with every hoop pole lost. The merchant became bankrupt, and cast about for a new means of livelihood. The law was suggested, and was followed so much more successfully than flatboating that John H. Mulkey became justice of the Illinois Supreme Court after a brilliant career as a trial lawyer.

Philadelphia and Pittsburgh were the customary markets for dry goods bought by pioneer merchants in the early days of Illinois statehood. The Pennsylvania wholesalers sold on terms of twelve months' credit. They shipped by stage over the mountains, by boat down the Ohio to some Illinois landing, and oxen would haul the goods to the store's counter.

Account books survive for such a store at Brownsville, seat of Jackson County until it was succeeded by Murphysboro in 1843. In 1818 James Hall sold such luxuries as black velvet, at $1.50 a yard; lutestring silk, $2.00 a yard; cambric, $1.00; checked silks,

bombazet, and blue muslin. The blue muslin was especially popular among Mr. Hall's customers. One belle bought 12½ yards of it, and paid .75 for slippers to complete the costume. Merchant Hall also sold feminine elegancies which he personally bought in New Orleans: a shawl for $3.00, a fine pair of slippers for $1.00.

Peltry, beeswax and wild honey, pork, and general farm produce made up the ordinary cargo of the southern Illinois flatboat bound for New Orleans. In one year of the fifties, Orval Pool of Shawneetown packed 33,000 hogs for southern markets. Rafts of lumber were made up at the mouth of almost every creek. Hoop poles, staves, and chair timbers floated merrily downriver.

About 1810 a prominent citizen of what is now Jackson County had his black man, Peter, shovel a bargeload of coal from the outcrop in the Big Muddy River bluffs. A marker on the adjacent highway at the outskirts of Murphysboro memorializes this first Illinois coal mine. Master and man set off down the Big Muddy and into the Mississippi, bound for the New Orleans market with the first shipment of Illinois coal. One account says that they passed New Madrid the day of the earthquake and Black Peter thought that the end was upon him. They arrived safely, sold their cargo for silver rix-dollars, and returned by schooner across Lake Pontchartrain and by horseback along the Natchez Trace.

The pioneer mine operator was William Boon, captain of the local ranger company during the Indian troubles incident to the War of 1812 and senator in the second and third Illinois general assemblies. Joseph Duncan, governor of Illinois in the thirties, also barged several loads of coal to New Orleans while he lived beside the Mississippi just north of Tower Rock. This was during the time that Duncan was senator from Jackson County and was actively supporting the first free school law for Illinois.

The beds of coal along the Big Muddy River some twenty-five miles from its entrance to the Mississippi were noted in all the early guides for steamboat navigation. Zadok Cramer even mentioned shipments of this fuel to New Orleans in his 1814

Navigator. In 1848 it cost $2.25 a ton to deliver Big Muddy coal by ark to New Orleans, where the minimum price was $7.50 a ton and $12 or $15 in winter.

As steamboats succeeded flatboats, a nearer market developed for Big Muddy coal. Professional miners tunneled into the squat bluffs and they filled cars that were drawn by a mule along a wooden railroad to the river bank. There the coal piled up until high water, when it could be floated down to the Mississippi where coalyards supplied the steamboats. In 1850 a small steamboat, the *Walk-in-the-Water,* was bought as a coal carrier. When the Mississippi neared flood stage, the Big Muddy filled with backwater. Then the *Walk-in-the-Water* made daily trips from the coalyards on the Mississippi, to be loaded overnight at the mines on the outskirts of Murphysboro. Thus a season's supply of coal would be moved to market, and the miners would begin to dig, in preparation for the next flood. Then for several seasons water did not rise high enough to permit the small steamer to cross the shoals, the steamboat owners made other contracts for coal, and the trade diminished. The Civil War ended all activity. After the war the company's railroad hauled the coal cars to Grand Tower and the Mississippi, or to Carbondale and the Illinois Central Railroad.

Cairo was the busy place of southern Illinois during the four years of war. Its commanding position on the two great rivers made it the gateway between North and South. Scarcely had Fort Sumter been fired on, when the Secretary of War, Simon Cameron, called on Governor Yates of Illinois to occupy "Grand Cairo" with four regiments. The first of these soldiers reached the town on April 23, the day a rebel force marched into Columbus, Kentucky, only twenty miles away. The loss of Cairo to the Union was thus averted by a narrow margin. That same week steamers loaded with ammunition shipped from St. Louis to the South were seized at Cairo.

This was the opening of the war in the West, and pointed the way to the four years in which the Cairo levee was in constant

confusion, soldiers coming and going, transports, gunboats, hospital and prison ships replacing the trading boats and tri-weekly packets of the days before the war. An unimpressive fort was built on the Point, to defend the town against expected attacks by rebel gunboats, but they did not develop. General Grant took command at Cairo in the fall of 1861. From his headquarters on the Ohio levee the armies of the West operated until the Mississippi flowed again "unvexed to the sea."

The Mississippi squadron of gunboats and armed steamboats presents a colorful chapter in the history of the rivers during the Civil War. Mound City, now county seat of Pulaski County, was the headquarters of this inland navy with Admiral David D. Porter in command. This navy station was not discontinued until 1874. A hospital, marine ways, and a fine landing marked it.

An Indian mound upon the Ohio River bank gave this town its name when it was platted in 1854 by General Moses Marshall Rawlings. Other mounds were scattered nearby, but this one was used as a gathering place for stump speaking, preaching, and courting. Frames of many of the houses of Mound City were built in some upriver town and brought down by steamboat. General Rawlings built a duplicate of his house in Louisville and shipped it to his new city. Though he walked barefoot into Shawneetown without a dollar to his name, General Rawlings became the merchant prince of that city. He was one of the commissioners who negotiated loans in London to back the Illinois internal improvements of 1837. Among his many interests was his ownership of the steamboat *Tuskinia,* and it was the General's pleasure to replace her captain on occasion. With frantic whistles and bells echoing one another, the boat would execute every maneuver known to the rivers under the owner's erratic command.

Mound City was chosen as the berth for the Civil War river navy largely because of its marine ways, built in 1857. The machinery was cast at a local foundry, whose buildings were used to store shot and shell for the Mississippi squadron until an explosion destroyed both foundry and naval stores. There have

been many contrasts with those days of war. The showboats *Cotton Blossom* and French's *New Sensation* have been hauled up for repairs on the same marine ways where gunboats were serviced after encounters with rebel torpedoes. The first *Cotton Blossom* was built at Mound City.

Captain William L. Hambleton came from Cincinnati to take charge of the marine ways when they were built. He remained in command during their lease to the government. Captain Hambleton was one of the commissioners for building the present Statehouse at Springfield and also for the national cemetery at Mound City.

Romeo Friganza, a native of the Balearic Islands in the Mediterranean, was detailed to Mound City as naval construction engineer. His granddaughter, Miss Trixie Friganza, has charmed many an audience as a comedienne of the vaudeville and musical comedy stage since her school days at Mound City.

Three ironclad gunboats were built at the Mound City ways under Captain Hambleton's supervision. One was named the *Mound City,* another the *Cairo.* Many other armed craft berthed there from time to time, for repairs or supplies. These were part of the river fleet intended, in the words of the commander-in-chief, to navigate "wherever it is a little damp."

These vessels were manned by the Mississippi Marine Brigade, of which Brigadier General A. W. Ellet took command at Mound City on November 9, 1862. This corps, known as Ellet's horse marines or sea scouts, included volunteers from many infantry companies recruited in the counties that border the rivers in southern Illinois. They matched their grandfathers' daring tales of flatboating through hostile Indian country. Their own exploits lay in running the rebel batteries at Vicksburg and Grand Gulf.

With the coming of peace, the elegance of the steamboat blossomed anew for the brief season before that steamboat on wheels, the railroad, replaced the river queens. The ladies' cabin with its carpets and mirrors, the dining salon with a menu the envy of

Lucullus, the passengers that can only be described with the nostalgia of a vanished romance—all saw a brief return to glory. Over all ranked the captain, a king of men in whose presence ordinary mortals trod lightly and spoke softly.

There is a little story to illustrate the proper attitude before these lords of creation. A lanky countryman astride a mule hailed a steamboat tied up at a small landing. He insisted on seeing the captain, although every man on board tried to learn his business without disturbing that august personage. Finally the irascible captain strode out on the deck and demanded what was wanted. This was the request: "Just wanted to know, can my mule take a drink out of your river?"

The very climax of the pageant of the packets lies in the storied race between the *Natchez* and the *Robert E. Lee*. Each was commanded, owned, and built by a Kentuckian, whose traditional love of fine horses found a worthy substitute in a lifetime devotion to steamboats. The *Natchez,* Captain Thomas P. Leathers, made 401 trips between New Orleans and Vicksburg without a single accident during her nine and one-half years of service. She was the eighth of that name on the rivers; the first, the steamboat that landed General Lafayette at Kaskaskia in 1825.

The *Robert E. Lee* was built at New Albany, Indiana, while Civil War antagonisms continued strong. Her name was not announced until the completed steamboat moved to the Kentucky side of the river. There the venerated name of the Confederate leader was painted on her paddle boxes, and roustabouts began to sing "Working on the *Robert E. Lee.*"

Captain John W. Cannon of the *Lee* resolved to beat the time of fast trips made by the *Natchez*. Steamboat racing was an accepted rivalry on the rivers, where the first boat to get a landing stage to the bank got the waiting freight. The race between the *Natchez* and the *Lee* was an advertising scheme, in a sense, for every passenger and shipper would prefer to use the winner. It involved great risk, and expense of more than $10,000 for each boat.

On June 30, 1870, the *Lee* pulled away from the wharf at New Orleans five minutes before the *Natchez* was scheduled to leave. For days the projected race had been the talk of the world, and bets were laid by the financiers of London and Paris as freely as by the deckhands on the Mississippi. As the two contestants proceeded upriver for St. Louis, the *Lee* always ahead, each boat's time was telegraphed and cabled everywhere.

Captain John S. Hacker, who spent a lifetime on the rivers, remembers the day at Cairo when every thought was for the approaching racers. He was aboard one of the local steamboats which took a capacity load of passengers to the bend at Wickcliffe, Kentucky. One was the sidewheel packet, the *Idlewild* of Evansville, Indiana. The editor of the *Cairo Bulletin* found the intentions of these smaller steamboats amusing. In the issue of June 30, 1870 he wrote:

> The Paducah *Kentuckian* of Wednesday says that the steamer *Armada* will leave that city on Sunday morning next and will go down the Mississippi river until she meets the *Lee* and *Natchez,* it being her purpose to escort the winning boat to Cairo! "Escort" is good. We see the *Lee* or *Natchez,* tearing the Mississippi wide open in a contest for the "horns" and the *Armada* escorting her. The *Armada* is a very swift and well appointed little steamer, but she will find herself anything but a success as an "escortist" of the *Lee* or *Natchez.*

In Cairo itself the center of attraction was the telegraph office. All day the street was jammed with men who snatched the bulletins thrown out of the windows there. Many reported false accidents and delays first to one boat, then the other, with the intention of influencing the betting. As the time of the *Lee's* arrival approached, the crowd and betting increased. The city's cannon was taken to the Point and salutes were fired as the *Lee* passed. Few waited the three hours and twenty-four minutes that elapsed before the *Natchez* came around the bend.

Henry C. Crow is the only man still living in Grand Tower of the 9,000 who watched the race from Front Street. The new

railroad ran excursions into the river town that was then its terminus. Residents of several counties gathered with their cannon, firearms, and fireworks. Bonfires were built, and the crowd made a night of it. When the glow from the racing steamboats' fireboxes lit the sky the din was terrific.

Grand Tower's noise was but a whisper to the shout that went up when the winner docked at St. Louis. The *Robert E. Lee* completed the 1,278 mile course in 3 days, 18 hours, and 14 minutes. The *Natchez* docked 3 hours and 44 minutes later. More than $1,000,000 changed hands. Many bets were called off, because of misunderstanding the terms of the race. But no one doubted that the steamboat was unrivaled queen of her era in transportation. Now the steamboats are gone, but the rivers roll on.

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ROBERT KENNICOTT

PIONEER ILLINOIS NATURAL SCIENTIST AND ARCTIC EXPLORER

By JAMES ALTON JAMES*

At eighteen years of age, Robert Kennicott had gained recognition for his collection of natural history material having to do with northern Illinois.[1] His home since childhood had been at Northfield, a village eight miles northwest of Evanston. His father, John Kennicott, a physician, having given up the practice of medicine, turned to horticultural pursuits and became celebrated as a leader in horticultural science. Robert was unable, because of ill health, to carry on his education in the classroom and became assistant to his father, thus becoming devoted to the study of natural history. From his tutors, employed by his own and a number of families in the neighborhood, he acquired a knowledge of English subjects and of German and Latin.

"The Grove," home of the Kennicotts, noted for its many varieties of trees, shrubs and flowers, was a center of attraction for many citizens of Chicago. Robert's early and important observations on the habits of certain vertebrates and of larger birds such as the crane, and grouse, attracted the attention of Dr. J. I. Kirtland of Cleveland, a well-known natural scientist and friend of Dr. Kennicott. The winter of 1852-1853, Robert spent in Cleveland pursuing a regular course of study in natural history

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[1] He was born in New Orleans, Nov. 13, 1835.

under the direction of Dr. Kirtland.[2] Advised by his instructor, he began a correspondence with Spencer Fullerton Baird, one of the leading naturalists of the time, assistant secretary, and later secretary, of the Smithsonian Institution.

Returning to "The Grove," Kennicott devoted the summer of 1853 to making a collection of fishes and reptiles, discovering many new species. During the autumn, under the direction of Dr. Daniel Brainard, a noted surgeon and member of the faculty of Rush Medical College, he made a series of experiments on the effects of the venom of the rattlesnake upon the animal system when taken into the stomach. The results were published by Dr. Brainard in the *Smithsonian Reports*. The following March, he went to Racine, Wisconsin, where he took up his study under the direction of Dr. P. R. Hoy, who was known as a leading ornithologist. In a letter introducing his son, Dr. Kennicott wrote: "Bob is a good, kind-hearted and very conscientious boy, a little too bold and confident to suit everyone, but he suits me. We believe in self-reliant, go-ahead boys of Bob's type but not in the 'Young America' of the cities."

At intervals during the years 1855 and 1856, Robert spent some time with Dr. Hoy, actively engaged in zoological studies. He was still ambitious to secure a classical education but since every effort in that direction had been foiled by broken health, upon the advice of friends, he abandoned the idea and determined to get his education "in the field."

Officers of the Illinois Central Railroad, desiring to discover the natural resources of their Illinois land, proposed to the State Agricultural Society in 1855, that a co-operative natural history survey of the state should be made. Robert Kennicott was put in charge and spent the summer in exploration. The following

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[2] The volumes given him for study were to influence his career. They were: Captain James Cook's *Vancouver* and Governor George Simpson's *Overland Journey Round the World*. It was suggested by his instructor that the Russian possessions offered a new and rich field for investigation by the naturalist. Letter of Dr. Kirtland to William H. Seward, April 5, 1867. *Executive Documents*, 40 Cong., 2 sess., 1867-1868, no. 177, p. 31.

winter he attended lectures on medicine in Chicago but because of ill health he was forced to return to his home.

During April, 1856, the results of his survey of the natural history of southern Illinois were published, in part, in the *Proceedings* of the Philadelphia Academy of Natural Sciences. A number of articles from his pen appeared also in *The Prairie Farmer,* written with the desire to awaken among farmers an interest in zoological pursuits. An article by him on the mammals of the Northwest was published in the Agricultural *Report* of the United States Patent Office for 1857. This article received favorable comment by scientists because of its clearness of statement, its accuracy of detail, and its wealth of new facts regarding the smaller mammals which heretofore had received little attention by writers. It was of value to farmers through the suggestions of means to avoid the depredations of rodents. It served likewise to establish the author as a field-naturalist of unusual promise. He pointed out for the first time the difference in habits between certain western animals and those of the East, previously supposed by naturalists to be identical. Writing Dr. Hoy, he stated: "I wish to show these gentlemen that if two-legged animals in the West follow Eastern fashions, four-legged ones don't." Louis Agassiz, in his preface to *Contributions to the Natural History of the United States,* referred to the assistance given him by Kennicott in his study of the geographical distribution of the soft-shelled turtles in the Mississippi River tributaries.

Upon the recommendation of Dr. John Evans, president of the Northwestern University Board of Trustees, 1857, Robert was engaged to make a collection in zoology and botany and take the necessary steps for building up a University museum. His proposal to the trustees, which was accepted, stated:

> I will make a collection of the animals of Illinois and the neighboring states for the Northwestern University upon the following terms. The first year I will work six months in the summer for $90 per month furnishing myself with the necessary collecting apparatus, such as collecting cans and

chest, gun, seine, entomological nets, traps, taxidermists instruments, etc., for $85 if the University furnishes these. The University in either case paying all necessary expenses of traveling, board, transportation of specimens; collecting materials as ammunition, alcohol, arsenic, jars, etc.; and for such assistance in the field as is necessary to conduct the operation in the manner most profitable to the interests of the University.

This was the real beginning of his brilliant career. In the second published circular of the University, that for 1857-1858, his name appeared as a member of the faculty with the announcement: "Mr. Kennicott, Curator of the Museum, is collecting a Museum of Natural History." The first catalogue, 1858-1859, stated:

> The Museum of Natural History, collected by Mr. Robert Kennicott, assumes perhaps the first rank among the collections of the West. No Museum in the country can be more reliable for study and reference, the specimens in each Department having been labeled, under the auspices of the Smithsonian Institution by a scientific gentleman making that department his specialty.

In acknowledgment of their obligation to the Smithsonian Institution, for exchanges, contributions, and facilities afforded to the Curator, the Board of Trustees invited students of natural history and collectors to visit and make use of the Cabinet of the University for study and comparison.

In making this collection, Kennicott traveled throughout Illinois. His discoveries among the fauna of southern Illinois were especially important. He spent three months on this expedition. At Anna, he received much assistance from Colonel Ashley. He visited, among other places, Jonesboro, Salem, New Madrid, and Cairo, and at each of these he made discoveries and added to his collection of the fauna of the region. He discovered several species of birds previously known only in the extreme South.

Returning to Evanston in July, having made a temporary disposition of the collection in a room of the University, he decided

to secure specimens from as wide a geographical range as possible and set out for the Red River of the North. He wrote:

> After leaving St. Paul, I slept on the ground rolled up in my blanket, ate what game I shot, with a little tea and crackers, and traveled for days with no kindly human being in sight but my one companion (an old voyageur though a young man) and even had the happiness to be in little danger from Indians, parties of whom made predatory attacks upon weak companies on the same route we were travelling a short time before. . . . After reaching the south bend of Red River the train of Red River carts came along and leaving my quondam companion I joined the train and started for a long march across the northern plains west of Red River to Red River settlement, some distance north of the U. S. boundary line. I finally went to within a few miles of Lake Winnipeg.[3]

On this expedition of four months, he made a number of acquaintances with traders of the Hudson's Bay Company, which proved of value to him in his later explorations in British America. Upon his return, he devoted himself to the arrangement of exhibits in his collection in the University Museum and to their identification and increase by exchange.

In promoting these objectives, he made his first visit to the Smithsonian Institution, arriving in Washington about the middle of December, 1857, remaining until the latter part of April, 1858. There he was occupied in the selection of specimens for the University from the duplicates in the Smithsonian Museum, and in the classification and description of the material collected by him on his expeditions. "The University Museum was enriched with a large collection of birds, fishes, reptiles, insects, crustaceans and unios. In the Zoological series alone there were 2,500 species."[4] The results of his explorations were published in the Patent Office Agricultural *Report,* 1857, under the title, "Mammals of the Northwest."

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[3] From a letter in the possession of H. L. Kennicott.

[4] Oliver Marcy, *Report on the Museum of Natural History,* 1871, pp. 130-31.

While residing in Washington, Kennicott made the acquaintance of a number of men of science and was welcomed by them as a worthy co-worker. He was admitted to the Megatherium Club,[5] made up of the younger naturalists and explorers who were, like himself, collaborating at the Smithsonian the results of their expeditions. It was said of him that he soon became one of the most prominent and valued members of the club, his thoroughly generous and genial disposition making him a favorite with all. Among the sounds of mirth which were to be heard at the close of a day of thoughtful, scientific labor, "Kennicott's voice was ever the most cheery, his tale the freshest, and his song the blithest." During May, 1858, he resumed his work at the University, completing it in July.

Because of the research by Kennicott and his success in founding the Northwestern University Museum, there was developed renewed interest in natural history among a few of the leading professional and business men in Chicago. As a result, on April 26, 1859, the Chicago Academy of Sciences was incorporated. The Chicago Academy of Natural Sciences had been founded two years earlier for the purpose of promoting scientific investigation, with James V. Z. Blaney, professor of natural sciences at Northwestern University, as its first president, and Dr. Nathan Smith Davis, a trustee of the University and later well-known dean of its Medical School, as vice-president. With subscriptions amounting to $1,500, a room was rented and the foundation of a museum was laid. The financial crisis of 1857 prevented collection of funds sufficient to pay the salary of the curator, Dr. Edmund Andrews, later professor of surgery at Northwestern University. Reorganization of the Society had been promoted by Kennicott, who made large donations of specimens to the museum.

Dominated with the desire for exploration, Kennicott, in 1859, resolved to undertake an expedition, the most important of

[5] Megas—great; therion—wild beast. So called because they made use of certain yells and war dances which they had seen in the West which were practiced by the Indians. Unfortunate neighbors called them "wild beasts."

his life, which lasted three years and included Central British America and portions of Russian America. Little had been done on the scientific investigation of the fauna of British America since the researches of Sir John Richardson. The geology of this region was less known. There was no means of determining how far formations, the area of which had been well defined for our northern states, might extend to the northward. It was to solve such questions as these, and to open an almost unknown field of research that Kennicott resolved, with the assistance of the Smithsonian and the Audubon Club of Chicago, to undertake the exploration of this region.

On his Red River expedition he had learned of the practicability of penetrating to the North, and of the probable co-operation of the Hudson's Bay Company in furthering such a plan. When it was determined that the exploration should be made by Kennicott, under the auspices of the Smithsonian Institution, Professor Joseph Henry, the secretary, wrote to Sir George Simpson, governor of the Hudson's Bay Company, inviting his assistance and information as to the best means of carrying out the enterprise.

In keeping with the advice of Governor Simpson, the officers of the Hudson's Bay Company extended to Kennicott the hospitality of their several posts and facilitated the objects of his perilous expedition. Any collection which he might make was to be given free transportation. Of his reception Kennicott wrote: "The larger part of the gentlemen in the Hudson's Bay Company service are Scotch. They are generally of good families and well educated; and that they are hospitable and companionable, I can testify of all whom I met." His journal contains observations on the natives and on the animal and plant life of this region here described for the first time. In addition to a most unusual breadth of knowledge, he showed remarkable ability in description and interpretation of what he observed through the course of this expedition. A brief outline only of the contents of his journal is

presented at this time.[6]

He reached Chicago on April 20, 1859, and after a few days spent in the completion of his outfit he sailed on the steamer *Fountain City* for Collingwood, Upper Canada. It was necessary to reach this point in order to take a steamer for Fort William on the northern shore of Lake Superior.

At Fort William, Kennicott made a collection of a number of birds. On May 19 he left Fort William with a brigade of three of the Hudson's Bay Company canoes going to Lake Winnipeg. These canoes were 36 feet long, 4 feet wide, and 2½ feet deep in the middle. The outer shell was of birch bark, and they were capable of carrying 300 pounds in addition to the Indian crew of 8 men. He wrote of the oarsmen keeping perfect stroke in paddling, and declared that when three canoes kept abreast as they sometimes did, all the men singing and keeping stroke together, "the effect was very exhilarating." They advanced with great rapidity, making forty strokes a minute and laboring from twelve to fifteen hours a day. On the morning of the twentieth they passed the first rapid in the Kaministiquoi River, called by the *voyageurs* "The Lazy Portage." Up this rapid the men were obliged to haul the canoes with lines. On the route he observed the scenery, vegetation, timber of various kinds, as birch, aspen, poplar, balsam, elm and noted whether the soil was good for agricultural purposes. Birds, as the grouse and partridge, were noted.

> A good tent enabled us to set the rain and wind at defiance and we needed no soft bed to induce sleep. . . . There is no denying that voyageurs are not apt to be very cleanly, either in their persons or in their cooking; but it is wonderful how any fastidiousness on the subject passes off when a traveler is voyaging in the wilderness.

From the Lake of the Woods they crossed to the head of the

[6] The published journal is in Volume I of the *Transactions of the Chicago Academy of Sciences*, 1867. The original was probably lost in the Chicago fire of 1871. Eight copies only of this volume are known to exist. Three of them are in Chicago libraries—one in the Chicago Academy of Sciences, one at the University of Chicago, and the third at Northwestern University.

Winnipeg River and descended to Lake Winnipeg, after making numerous portages and running many rapids. At Norway House, a Hudson's Bay Company post on this lake, Kennicott met Governor Simpson, who expressed great interest in the success of his exploration. On June 15 they left Norway House, crossing Lake Winnipeg 200 miles in a large boat forty feet long by eight feet wide, and encamped on the northern shore on the eighteenth. Here he made a "great haul of beetles." The "Brigade" moved from 2:00 in the morning until 9:00 or 10:00 at night. They ascended the Saskatchewan River to Cumberland Lake. This passage was very uncomfortable, being through small lakes and swamps with scarcely a dry spot to camp on, while the air was filled with myriads of mosquitoes. From Lake Athabaska they proceeded to Fort Resolution at the mouth of the Slave River on the southwest shore of Great Slave Lake, and then to the head of the Mackenzie River. The Mackenzie is described as a magnificent stream, deep, rapid, and averaging rather over one and one-half miles in width.

Descending the Mackenzie 600 miles, Fort Simpson was reached, August 14, after a voyage of fourteen days. At Fort Simpson potatoes and barley were grown, and there were also fine oxen and cows. Dried reindeer, moose meat and fish were the chief articles of food in that district. The coldest temperature ever known there was sixty-two degrees below zero. Here Kennicott passed the autumn and the close of 1859, spending his time in the study of the Indian language, and for three weeks in October he was on a trip to Fort Laird near the Rocky Mountains. On his return, which consumed nine days, he remarked: "I got on very well this time without lameness or great fatigue although walking every step of the way."

In August, 1860, he descended the Mackenzie River to Peel's River, latitude sixty-seven degrees, thirty minutes. From that post he crossed the mountains to La Pierre's House, arriving on September 18, and then descended the Porcupine River 200 miles, within Russian territory, to the Yukon River at Fort

Yukon. Here he spent the winter of 1860-1861, and the following summer with the chief factor of the Hudson's Bay Company, James Lockhart, engaged in hunting and trapping, thus procuring large collections of specimens for the Smithsonian. He related:

> My reputation for medicine enabled me to do some good too. These northern Indians have few diseases, but if one gets a little sick he is pretty sure to die, for they are such cowards, that they fairly frighten themselves to death. In two instances I cured Indians that were said to be dying, by small doses of toothpowder, alum and morphine, the morphine making them sleep and temporarily relieving pain in the manner I told them it would. This so increased their faith in my powers that they recovered simply from believing in my assertion that they would get well. I have had plenty of patients at Peel's River and have been a highly successful doctor.

Of his return he wrote:

> We have crossed the highest part of our track over the mountains, just at the first appearance of the gray light in the southeast, which precedes the first real daylight by several hours at this season, and here, about nine o'clock on Christmas morning, I stopped and smoked the last of my cigars to the health and "conduction" of the family circle assembled at "The Grove," and to the Megatheria and then sang: "Do they miss me at home." But the temperature was more than 40° below zero, too cold for cigars or sentiment, so I got my sled, relieved my feelings by a yell, the like of which some of you mayhap remember, which started my dogs off on a gallop, and rode down the mountains singing *"La Claire Fontaine"* and other voyaging songs, to encourage my dogs, for dogs and horses seem to like singing, and what the sounds I produced wanted in melody they made up in volume. When we put ashore for dinner we found it intensely cold and I froze my fingers by handling the iron buckles in unharnessing my dogs.
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> My Christmas dinner you will hardly guess. The men with me had pemmican which I dislike, but one of them by some lucky chance, had brought a large fresh white fish. They chopped the skin off this and cutting it up with an axe

boiled it for me, and it with a pound or so of melted moose-tallow and a few quarts of tea, a little weaker than would skin one's mouth, made up my Christmas "festin." Like all Arctic "festins," it supplied in quantity what it lacked in quality. But you never took your Christmas dinner on the top of the Rocky Mountains, after a constitutional of 12 hours, in a temperature 40° below zero. Therefore, you are not competent judges of how good boiled white fish, with moose-tallow sauce may be under such circumstances. After dinner we determined to have some kind of jollification in honor of the day, and decided upon a Louchions dance, a form of exercise which is undoubtedly calculated to promote the circulation of the blood. So we left our dining place quite warm.

We got to La Pierre's House about nine o'clock P. M. It grew intensely cold about the time we arrived (the coldest weather of the season, so Flett says, probably 60° below), and in my delight at my dog's behavior, I forgot to rub my face and run sometimes to keep warm, and so froze my nose and cheeks. But I kept this *in cache* and so my first voyage over the mountains was a triumphant one.

We left La Pierre's House on the 31st of January. I was very tired and warm, and throwing myself down on the soft snow fell asleep at once. So I had a sleep on top of the Rocky Mountains.

He took three days for the return to Peel's River, where he spent the winter. During the spring of 1862, Kennicott walked from Peel's River to Fort Simpson, at which place he received word of the illness of his father, which occasioned his immediate return home, by the spring packet, arriving in Chicago on October 17, 1862.[7]

The winter of 1862-1863 Kennicott spent at the Smithsonian Institution, where he was engaged in cataloguing the Arctic collection, described as enormous. The importance of the results of the Arctic American expedition now became generally known, for the collection made by Kennicott was greatly increased by the contributions of his friends and officers of the Hudson's Bay

[7] The journal ends with this date.

Company whom he met in those remote and desolate trading posts where mails arrived only once a year. His success in dealing with those men was expressed in a letter from one of the officers of the company at Montreal. He wrote:

> It is no easy part to play, going as a stranger into a territory inhabited by men bound to a foreign government and with exclusive views on many points. But Mr. Kennicott knew how to meet the circumstances, and from his arrival among us until his departure was always popular and I believe inspired a sincere friendship and esteem among those with whom he most associated.[8]

One of his associates in the Smithsonian wrote of this experience as follows:

> The advent of Kennicott,—young, joyous, full of news of the outside world, ready to engage in any of their expeditions or activities, and to take hardships without grumbling,—was an event in their lives. When he taught them how to make birdskins and collect Natural History objects and showed them how, by means of their collections, their names would become known in the civilized world and even printed in books, they seized on the project with enthusiasm. . . . For more than ten years collections poured into Washington from the North, until those who had been inspired by Kennicott retired from active service.[9]

How intimate this friendship became may be seen in Kennicott's correspondence. Quoting from one of his letters:

> Our hearts were gladdened some two weeks since by the arrival of our share of the winter packet. . . . Upon my word McFarlane you and Lockhart quite make me ashamed of the little work I did in R. [Russian] District. . . . I would rather have had the honor of contributing what you

[8] Edward M. Hopkins to Joseph Henry, secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, Feb. 26, 1864.

[9] William Healy Dall, *Spencer Fullerton Baird, A Biography* (Philadelphia, 1915), 334-35. (Quoted by permission of J. B. Lippincott, pub.). "Robert Kennicott," Dall states, "[added] by his travels and collections, directly and indirectly perhaps more than any other collaborator to the riches of the Smithsonian Collection."

> and Lockhart have to the history of Arctic zoology than to be a chief factor in the H. B. Co. [Hudson's Bay Company] or a member of Parliament. The latter would be jolly during life but in the former case my name would be immortal among naturalists. . . . Indeed your names are already on record in many a public museum in Europe as well as America. From the kindness and friendship which you have all of you shown me I have no doubt you will be quite willing that our Chicago museum shall have a part of your future collections, and I beg that you will bear in mind this additional good that you can do by your operating in Arctic zoology. . . . For the first three years I shall spend the summers in Chicago and the winters mostly at the Smithsonian, and some little time with Prof. Agassiz at Cambridge, as he has complimented me by expressing the wish that I should work upon his collection of mammals. . . . There is an immense field open for discovery to you, and I would by all means advise you to cultivate it diligently. . . . Hurrah for the Chicago Museum and you working in it![10]

Two weeks before writing this letter he had agreed to accept the curatorship of the Chicago Academy of Sciences, later becoming its director and a trustee. The year 1864 was largely devoted to the transmission of portions of his collection of natural history from Washington to the new hall of the Academy and arranging them. In his task he was assisted by Henry M. Bannister, graduate of Northwestern, 1863, who had pursued the scientific course, was familiar with the University Museum, and later became its curator.

In the above-mentioned letter to McFarlane, Kennicott declared:

> You have sometimes heard me speak of my wish to establish a good museum of Natural History in Chicago which should enable me to work more effectually at what I consider my vocation—the making popular of Natural His-

[10] April 15, 1864. Letter to R. McFarlane, a Hudson's Bay Company factor whom he had met in the Arctic region. Quoted from W. H. Dall, *Spencer Fullerton Baird*, 372-77.

> tory and its advancement. . . . I have been appointed curator in charge of the museum, so that henceforth I shall be in charge of a sort of *"Young Smithsonian."* . . . One matter worthy of consideration is that I shall be paid a regular salary, which, if not large, will still keep me respectably, and enable me hereafter to devote myself wholly to natural history and to the creation of a great museum. . . . I must now study all departments in natural history in order to see that each receives due care in our museum, but my own original investigations will be mostly upon vertebrates, especially mammals, and perhaps somewhat on fishes.[11]

But in the results of this planning he was to have no share.

The first attempt to complete an Atlantic cable from the United States to Europe having failed, the Western Union Telegraph Company, inspired by the advice of Perry Collins, former United States consul at the mouth of the Amur River, began to consider in 1864 the possibility of sending an expedition to erect a telegraph line along the western coast of America across Bering Strait, to Europe through Siberia. The plan included a survey of Russian territory and the Yukon River, under the direction of Colonel Charles L. Bulkley. Kennicott agreed to accept the proposal that he should become chief of exploration providing that he might be permitted to select a corps of assistants who would collect specimens of the natural history of the region and divide the collections between the Chicago Academy of Sciences and the Smithsonian.[12] These conditions agreed upon, Kennicott, who was given the rank of major, and six young men, who later became known for their scientific investigations, left New York on March 21, 1865, on the steamer *Golden Rule*.[13] His companions were J. T. Rothrock, botanist; W. H. Dall, H. W. Elliott, Charles Pease, H. M. Bannister, Ferdinand Bischoff,

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[11] Dall, *Spencer Fullerton Baird*, 373-74.

[12] The North American Telegraph Association, which included the Western Union and a number of other companies, had granted the Smithsonian Institution the free use of their lines for the scientific objectives of the Institution.

[13] They landed at Greytown, Nicaragua, crossed the Isthmus, and then took a boat to San Francisco.

zoologists and geologists, and G. W. Maynard, an artist who joined the expedition as a volunteer. Three of the number, Rothrock, Elliott and Maynard, accompanied a construction party from San Francisco to northern British Columbia where preliminary building operations were begun along the Frazer River upon what came to be known as the "old telegraph trail."

Another party, which included Major Kennicott, Bannister, Pease and Dall, went north to Norton Sound, establishing headquarters at St. Michael, a Russian semi-fortified trading post. It was known that there was a large river, called the Kwickpak by Russian traders, which flowed through an extensive delta and entered Bering Sea. On the maps another large river was shown, the Colville, which flowed into the Arctic Ocean and was called in its upper portion, the Yukon. With the facts obtained on his earlier expedition in mind, Kennicott was positive that the Kwickpak and Yukon were really names of the same river. He had heard from the natives at Fort Yukon that white men had come upon the river in boats, and concluded that they must have been traders from St. Michael.

Two exploring parties were organized which were to proceed from a second supply post located on Norton Sound some sixty miles beyond St. Michael. From this point, one party, led by Kennicott, was to cross the portage of 100 miles, in the spring, to Nulato, a small Russian post, proceed up the Yukon River and meet the party from the South at the watershed between the Yukon and the Frazer rivers. The other party was to explore the portage between the Yukon River and Bering Strait.[14] Bannister, who was given charge of the stores at St. Michael, was to

[14] Slight knowledge of this region was gathered from three sources. Captain Vitus Bering was the discoverer, 1728. Captain James Cook named the islands and the principal points on the shore, 1778. A Russian naval lieutenant, Zagoskin, had gone up the river a short distance from Nulato and declared that further navigation was impossible. Some ten years before the arrival of the American party, a lieutenant and naval surgeon had been left for the winter at St. Michael by a Franklin searching ship. The lieutenant had ascended the river, as far as Nulato, where he was killed by the Indians.

make meteorological observations and collections for the Smithsonian.[15] At Unalakleet, on Norton Sound, Major Kennicott and his party of ten men built a house which was to be occupied for the winter. With three companions, he then pushed across the portage to Nulato. Throughout the winter he was engaged in maturing his plan for ascending the Yukon.

As related by Lieutenant Charles Pease, one of his companions:

> Attended by an Indian or two he went out on the bleak, desolate mountains west of Nulato, looking for a pass to the sea-coast and gathering materials for a map of the vicinity. . . . His sufferings, mental and physical, during the period when he was on those forbidding mountains can be but faintly realized from a few chance words he afterwards let fall. His was the Spartan courage which suffered and gave no sign. . . . After his return he seemed to throw off his dejection. He began to enjoy the gradual approach of leaves, birds and salmon, and thought less of the cares and annoyances of the dreary winter season. . . .
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> During the day he was observed to be quieter than usual. There is no doubt but that he felt premonitions of an attack similar to the one from which he suffered while in San Francisco. These premonitions weighed on his mind so that he could not sleep. He rose and drew up directions for the carrying on of the explorations, under the superintendence of his faithful companion, Lieutenant Frank E. Ketchum. . . . About eight o'clock breakfast was on the table, but where was the Major. All dispersed in search of him. A few hundred yards from the fort his body was found. On the beach was placed the Major's pocket compass and lines indicating the bearings of the various mountains in sight, drawn in the soft alluvium, showing that he had been busy in adding to his

[15] Fort St. Michael was located on an island (St. Michael), in Norton Sound, just off the mainland, 63° 30′ N. The Russian post was made up of six houses, a store, two storehouses, government house, barracks, bathhouse, and dwelling for the commander. These buildings were arranged around a court. Outside the enclosure were other buildings, as the blacksmith shop and chapel. At two of the angles were two small blockhouses with openings for firing muskets and larger guns. The post was manned by about twenty Russians and half-breeds. One-fourth of a mile away was a collection of Eskimo huts, and on the island was a small Indian village.

material for a map of the country around Nulato when his death occurred.

A large skinboat under the command of his friend from boyhood, Charles Pease, proceeded with the body down the Yukon, 500 miles, to St. Michael. In charge of Pease and Bannister it was carried aboard the flagship *Nightingale,* which sailed for San Francisco on October 1, 1866.[16]

Robert Kennicott has been called Illinois' first and most gifted scientist. Henry Bannister wrote of him:

> He was the best man in some respects that I ever knew, one of the most kind hearted and self sacrificing. This hardly fitted him to command a party such as ours, with some of the elements that it contained. . . . He was not a robust man, although he showed great endurance and had he lived he would have become one of the best known explorers with the opportunities that would have been offered him.

Another companion wrote:

> He joined to a noble and generous heart an enthusiastic love of nature; defying in the pursuit of knowledge the miasma of the tropics and the rigors of the Arctic winter; manfully enduring isolation, sickness and privation and dying in the field, a martyr to the conscientious discharge of his duty.[17]

The exploration of Russian America (Alaska), as he planned was carried out at once by his associates. Lieutenant Ketchum and two companions proceeded from Nulato up the Yukon River to Fort Yukon, thus completing the exploration of the entire course of that river, and confirming Major Kennicott's theory of the identity of the Kwickpak and Yukon rivers. A second party crossed the interior of the peninsula from the head

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[16] On the anniversary of his death, May 13, 1867, at Nulato, a cross and tablet were raised to his memory by W. H. Dall, one of his associates. Inscription: "To the Memory of Robert Kennicott, Naturalist, Who Died Near This Place, May 13th, 1866, Aged Thirty." He was buried at "The Grove" near Northfield. Appropriate services were held later at the Chicago Academy of Sciences.

[17] William H. Dall, *Alaska and its Resources* (Boston, 1870).

of Norton Sound to Bering Strait. The unknown section between Nulato and the head of Norton Sound was explored by a third group.

Construction on the overland telegraph line from Siberia and the eastern approach, by the forces along the Frazer River and the Yukon, was abandoned when it was learned that Cyrus W. Field had at last succeeded in completing the trans-Atlantic cable on July 27, 1866.[18]

Two of the explorers and collectors, Henry M. Bannister, who had for over a year been stationed at St. Michael, and Ferdinand Bischoff, who had spent fourteen months at Sitka, were the first of the scientists who had been associated with Major Kennicott to reach Washington. The treaty for the cession of the Russian Territory to the United States had just been committed to the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, by its chairman, Charles Sumner. The influence of the testimony of these men constitutes a new chapter now being written on the acquisition of Alaska by the United States in 1867.[19]

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[18] News of this accomplishment did not reach Russian America for another year. The cost of exploration and partial construction of the Overland Telegraph Line amounted to $3,000,000.

[19] Five small volumes, recently discovered by the writer, constitute "The Journal" of Henry M. Bannister. From the material in these volumes, together with that in the journal of Major Kennicott, may be gained an understanding of the significance of this earliest scientific exploration of Alaska.

EGYPT'S CULTURAL CONTRIBUTION

By G. W. SMITH*

THE EARLY SETTLERS

When George Rogers Clark and his "Virginia Long Knives" marched across the wilderness country lying between Fort Massac on the Ohio and Kaskaskia on the Mississippi, the only white people in or about southern Illinois were miserable remnants of French settlers at Vincennes on the Wabash, and at Cahokia and Kaskaskia on the Mississippi. The first English-speaking people who came into Illinois as settlers, came at the end of the Revolutionary War. Between that date and the end of the century very few settlers came into the territory we call Egypt. The census of 1800 shows a population of less than 2,500 in what is now Illinois. But within the first third of the nineteenth century, the south third of the state became thickly settled.

It would be a serious mistake to assume that the 40,000 people who had come into Illinois before it became a state had made no cultural progress in their earlier homes. On the contrary one needs only to go into the regions of these earlier homes, in the older states, and there observe the evidences still remaining of the culture and refinement which prevailed in the life of a hundred years ago. These evidences are to be seen in hundreds of beautiful old homes, in the old churches, the schools, the colleges, in public libraries, in old courthouses, and in the state capitols.

But it will help us properly to estimate the limited spread of this culture in early Egypt to bear in mind that a large majority of the 40,000 people who were here in 1818 were not from the

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higher walks of life in the Old South. They were *in* this life but not *of* it. They brought with them when they came much of the cultural worth which they had acquired by contact. However, not a few of those who came were from the higher strata of the social life in the Old Southland. These few were the leaven that leavened the whole lump.

An interesting bit of local history was enacted by many of the early arrivals in southern Illinois. Egypt with its rocky hills and bluffs, its forest areas, its springs, its rivers, and climate was much like their former homeland. There were many reasons why they should settle in Egypt. But there was also an alluring temptation coming from the great prairies in the central part of the state. And many a Tennessean or Carolinian, on reaching southern Illinois, passed by the familiar hills of Egypt and made his way northward and parked his covered wagon on the open prairies.

A couple or three seasons, including the winters, in the prairie homes enabled these prairie farmers to assemble sufficient reasons to justify their return to the hill country of Egypt. They argued that neither their plows nor their horses could stand the strain of breaking the prairie sod. They said that the drinking water on those flat prairies was unhealthful, and that the chills and fever were seasonal visitors. There were no forests to shelter their stock in winter or to furnish firewood for the long winters. And, finally, there could be no social or religious life where there were only two families on a square mile of land. The reasons were sufficient, and many of these prairie farmers returned to the hospitable hills of Egypt.

THREE PHASES OF CULTURE

A brief general survey of the people found in Egypt in an early day will reveal three general phases of culture, resulting from three distinct types of pioneers:

There were the German immigrants who began arriving about the time the territory was admitted into the Union. They settled

chiefly in what is now St. Clair County. They found quite a few French and a larger number of Americans, but the Germans dominated the situation. In the course of a few years they spread into the adjoining counties of Madison, Monroe, Randolph, and Washington.

Another group from old England settled in what is now Edwards County. In numbers the group was not large, but they were a very active people and they greatly affected the life of the people in the surrounding counties of Wabash, Richland, Wayne, and White.

The third group, Americans—mostly southerners—was much larger in number than the other two groups combined. The settlers in this group came from the older settled states—those who came from New England were known as Yankees, and those coming from the states south of the Potomac and east of the Ohio were known as the southerners. The Yankees were scattered somewhat among the other settlers, and outside of their educational contribution furnished few cultural forms.

Religiously, the Germans were either Catholic or Lutheran. In both churches there was an educated ministry. The form of church government was Episcopal or Synodical; discipline was moderately strict.

The English group, contrary to what we might expect, was not Episcopal in church government, but was Independent or Congregational. Whether there was any connection between the church government in the English Prairie churches and the church at New Harmony, I do not know, but church organizations in the two settlements were very much alike. They were both reformed churches. The New Harmony church was a revolt against the Lutheran church of Württemberg, and the English Prairie church was a revolt against the Established Church of England.

The third group—the southerners—brought with them the church beliefs and the governments common in the states south of the Potomac and east of the Ohio—excepting the established

church of the Atlantic slope. These organizations included the Baptist, the Christian, the Methodist, and the Presbyterian churches. The first and the second were Independent or Congregational, the third Episcopal and the fourth Synodical.

There were differences among the three groups of settlers in regard to schools and education. Among the Germans the school was a parish school or a parochial school. It was carried on and supported by the agencies that sustained the church.

The English settlers were themselves a fairly well educated people. They were deeply concerned about the education of their children. Schools were provided soon after the homes were erected. Tradition says that their teachers were well educated and cultured men and women. These schools were privately supported.

The educational ideals of the southern or American settlers were not pitched on a very high plane. In fact there was not much enthusiasm among the southern immigrants for popular education. They had been accustomed back in the old states to think of education as a privilege belonging to the children of the slaveholding class. Because they were poor they could not afford private tutors, so they adopted a makeshift system, known as the "boarding around" system. But this makeshift system played its part well in the days of the pioneers.

Popular free school education was not provided by the state till 1854. But in spite of this neglect on the part of the state, schools, academies, and colleges were well distributed over southern Illinois by the middle of the last century.

SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

There were very material differences in the social life of the three groups of settlers. The German group, in the main, came directly from the old homeland in Europe, and naturally brought with them the forms and the spirit of the old home life. So much were the German customs in vogue among these early German

settlers that St. Clair County has often been called "Little Germany." These people were very liberal with regard to social customs. Their amusements and pastimes were entered into with equal zest by all. In fact families instead of couples made up the units in the large social gatherings on holidays. It is safe to say that no other group enjoyed themselves as did the German group.

The social life of the English settlers was somewhat formal. Their amusements were simple, and free from the suspicion of hilarity. No other group was more careful about keeping the Lord's day than were the English settlers. Their churches and their halls were generally occupied by preaching services or by lecturers on Sunday afternoons. In these matters the English settlers followed the customs of the good people of New Harmony. It is no disparagement to other groups of pioneers to say that the social life of the English pioneers was an indication of high cultural ideals.

The American settlers, coming in the main from the southern states, made little attempt to maintain strictly social forms. They did, however, maintain a unique form of social life. Their social life was not a separate life, but one vitally interwoven with their religious life, with their industrial life, and somewhat with their political life. If the Widow Brown's corn was to be gathered in the fall, or the winter's wood brought from the forest, or the winter's meat butchered, these tasks were cheerfully and religiously performed by the men of the neighborhood. And while the men were performing these services, the good women were helping Mrs. Brown with her knitting, her sewing, or her quilting. Some activities from which others seemed to get much pleasure were excluded from the social life of the southern pioneers because of their religious convictions.

THE NEW STATE AIDS IN CULTURAL GROWTH

The three groups of pioneers described above were not so seriously divided in their aims in life or so widely separated in

their methods of reaching their objectives as one might think. At least there was one great enterprise, one great objective to be reached, in the accomplishment of which there was wholehearted co-operation—namely, the founding of a great English commonwealth.

During the period when Illinois was a territory, there was slight opportunity for men to participate in political affairs; but when the time arrived to take the preliminary steps to make of this territory a sovereign state in the Union, then came the opportunity for every citizen to share in political privileges. It might be thought that since there were few opportunities for the people to take part in political movements, while Illinois was still a territory, that there would be a dearth of citizens who could qualify for participation in the work of securing the admission of the territory into the Union. But it turned out that many of our citizens of that day, who had come from the older states, had acquired a bit of experience in matters of state in their older homes. And it was from among these unpretentious citizens that men were chosen who were to frame our first state constitution. In like manner the new state must select its legislative, its executive, and its judicial officials from among this same body of common people. The high type of official duties performed by these plain citizens when called by their fellow men to positions of trust and responsibility, became matters of pride among our own people and of interest and good will among our neighbors in adjoining states.

Without doubt the problems which call for solution, and the forces which must be adjusted in a new state, as they were found in Illinois in 1818, call for a higher order of statesmanship than do the problems which arise after the machinery of state has been running for several decades. I am not sure just how far I can go in support of the theory that when great crises arise and there is need of men of thought and action, the Lord provides men who can justifiably say, "Here am I, Lord, send me."

Judge Joseph Gillespie and General Usher F. Linder, about the middle of the last century when they could accurately recall

the services of their fellow pioneers, made two lists of public men who had rendered valuable service in launching Illinois upon a peaceful and prosperous voyage. The Illinois of today may be in a measure thoughtless about its indebtedness to these men whom Judge Gillespie and General Linder honored in their naming. Most of these half-hundred men named as participating in the building of our beloved commonwealth had come into Illinois from the older states. They had brought with them from their former homes the richest stores of knowledge and experience in politics, in government, and in jurisprudence; and they gave out with an unstinted generosity invaluable help in organizing and directing the affairs of the new state at a time when help was greatly needed. At the same time these faithful pioneers, these honored citizens, brought with them from the older states a rich and varied stock of general culture, and as time passed they made liberal contributions to the cultural progress of our beloved Illinois.

It may not be easy to understand why these and other men who in their old homes had made abundant preparation for their life work and who had the promise of successful careers, left their native haunts and sought their fortunes in frontier fields. This problem may be partially solved when we have carefully studied the lifework of two beloved Egyptians—the Honorable William Jennings Bryan of Salem and the Honorable William Edgar Borah of Fairfield. But it will be helpful if we remember that no one ever made a cultural contribution to the life of a people who at the same time did not make a sacrifice of equal import.

HIGHER EDUCATION

The two decades following the admission of our state into the Union were marked by an increase in population and in conscious interest in many phases of public betterment; and out of this interest came the most valuable movement in the early cultural growth of our new state. This was the establishment of institutions for the advancement of higher education. This movement,

like most movements of this kind, had a humble beginning. Many of our people in the early years of our statehood were impressed with what they believed to be a fundamental principle in social science—which principle they found beautifully worded in the famous Ordinance of 1787. It reads: "Religion, morality, and knowledge being necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind, schools and the means of education shall forever be encouraged." This doctrine was a wonderful impulse toward higher ideals. It was and is the basic principle underlying American democracy and American culture. "The means of education shall forever be encouraged." This doctrine became very realistic when Congress, in the Enabling Act in 1818, provided that the sixteenth section of each township in Illinois should be reserved for the benefit of the common schools of that township. Congress made other liberal gifts to Illinois for the benefit of her public school system. Not many people in the early part of the last century really understood the wonderful impulse, the far-reaching influence upon the progress of culture resulting from these generous gifts from Congress to the State of Illinois.

Perhaps there was nowhere a more far-reaching cultural influence upon the early life of our people than that which came from schools, academies, and colleges which were set in operation in the first half of the last century. As might have been expected, elementary education was indifferently carried on in those early days, but the whole educational system was wonderfully strengthened by another phase of private effort.

Private schools known as academies, usually of the rank of our second class high schools of today, were established by churches or by private individuals. Such schools were in operation, for varying periods, at Jonesboro in Union County, at Crab Orchard in Williamson County, near Tamaroa in Perry County, at Rock Spring in St. Clair County, at Greenville in Bond County, near Alton in Madison County, at Mt. Carmel in Wabash County, at Salem in Marion County, at Westfield in Clark County and in several other counties to the north. The teachers in these

academies were usually from the East and were men and women of education and culture.

Some of these academies were the beginnings of small colleges which displaced the academy and continued and improved upon the character of the work done by the academies. The best known illustration is the transformation of the Rock Spring Academy into Shurtleff College.

EVOLUTION OF THE HOME

Let us not suppose that because our forefathers lived in log cabins they had brought no culture and refinement with them, or that there was no capacity in them for these qualities in this wilderness country. A study of the types and progress in the old homes reveals a steady movement upward in the culture of our people.

The one-room log cabin was the basic type of home for the first settlers in Illinois. This one room was kitchen, dining room, parlor, bedroom, and spare room. The first departure from this type of home was the double log house which consisted of two log cabins ten or twelve feet apart, with a continuous roof over both log ends and the intervening space which was known as the "dog trot." This intervening space between the two log cabins could be boarded up and windows and outside doors provided if the owner so desired. This made a three-room home and was the first step toward family privacy. The "dog trot" was not heated and was seldom floored. It was in just such a home as this that I visited Abraham Lincoln's biographer, William H. Herndon, back in the fall of 1879. He was living the simple life on Chinkapin Hill some six miles northwest of Springfield. He was at that time writing his history of the martyr president.

Mr. Herndon received me in the west room of his double log house in what might be called the living room. It was provided with simple furnishings. Here we talked about Lincoln. Mr. Herndon seemed very generous of his time and talked very freely

of his association with Lincoln when they practiced law in partnership. He invited me into his library which we reached by passing through the "dog trot." The library occupied the entire space in the east end of the log building. Here were his books, chairs, a large center table covered with books, papers and other small articles. Mr. Herndon asked me to stand at a certain place to get a good view of his picture of Lincoln. It was a lifesize portrait by Alban Jasper Conant, the portrait painter. The Herndon home was an ideal double log house.

The next step forward in home building was the two-story double log house. The construction was simple. Each log end of the double log house was two stories high with a long roof covering the log structures and the "dog trot." The latter had an upper floor and this middle part contained the stairway. These two-story log houses often had two large chimneys thus providing four fireplaces.

Some of these two-story houses are still standing. A fine example is the old McCorkle home a mile east of Vienna. It was built in 1824. Another is the Glassford house at West Vienna. Two miles west is the Bridges Tavern. The finest pattern is the old slave house three miles east of Equality. It was built in 1840, is fifty feet square, has a basement, two stories, and an attic. It is a frame structure but follows the general plan of the old log buildings. Perhaps the house of this type that Egyptians would like most to see preserved is the Joel Lackey home one and a half miles east of Pulaski. It is, however, only a story and a half high. In this old building Abraham Lincoln stayed overnight on his way from Caledonia to the Illinois Central station at Pulaski.

Lincoln was called from Springfield to Caledonia to defend a man who had committed murder in Pulaski County. Lincoln found a friend on the jury by the name of Joel Lackey who had lived in that county since 1822. When the trial was over, Lincoln expressed a desire to leave for Decatur on the morning train from Cairo. Lackey invited Lincoln to go home with him and declared that he would see that he was on the morning train north for

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Decatur. Lincoln accepted the kind invitation, and late that afternoon one might have seen Joel Lackey, a hill farmer of the Ozarks, and the future president of the United States riding merrily in a farm wagon over the hill road from Caledonia to Pulaski six or seven miles to the west. Lincoln remained overnight in the shabby log home with his friend Joel Lackey. Suffice it to say that Lincoln was on the morning train for Decatur.[1] These log cabins and their derivatives were the homes of the southern immigrants.

The homes which the German immigrants built were of a very substantial order. They were constructed of burnt clay bricks. The architectural design was characteristic. Many of these early homes may be seen in St. Clair County and in adjoining counties. In Mascoutah, a very old German center a few miles east of Belleville, one may see samples of the early German home. They are one-story buildings there, some with an attic with dormer windows, but rarely two-story houses of an early date. In the villages the houses were built often side by side, with long sloping roofs slanting toward and from the street. A brick fire wall is seen emerging a few feet above a common roof. There is usually no front yard and rarely a porch. Sometimes a business house is found in among the residences. Individual farmhouses, in German communities, often followed the village pattern.

The type of home of the early English immigrants was in a class by itself. They used the log cabin upon arrival, but soon thereafter they began the building of homes of clay bricks made after the fashion of the Egyptians—with straw. They also poured the clay walls much as we pour our concrete walls. Albion's neighbors across the Wabash used a clay brick with a grass binder.

But there was culture and even refinement in these crude types of pioneer homes. Very few of these earlier types remain. Quite a while before the end of the last century they were dis-

[1] The Editor believes this story to be apocryphal, but the author is convinced that a tradition so firmly seated as this must have a basis in fact.

placed by the frame structures which are common today. And while Egypt cannot boast of palatial homes, yet there is evidence everywhere that culture was early abroad in the land—even in Egypt.

PUBLIC BUILDINGS

Nothing reveals the culture of a people in general more faithfully than the character of their public buildings. It will therefore be interesting and profitable to follow the cultural development as revealed in the type and construction of public edifices in Egypt in the last century.

When a new county was created within the limits of our state either by state or by territorial authority, a private home usually near the center of the new county was designated as the seat of government until a permanent county seat was named. Often a private home would serve as a courthouse for a year or more. Usually some generous citizen, living near the center of the county, would donate twenty acres for the location of a new courthouse. The county commissioners would then lay off a square, in the center of which they erected a log courthouse. A town was platted about the square, lots were sold, and a common jail was erected. Sometimes the courthouse was two stories high with stairway on the outside.

The log courthouse was not long-lived. If pride did not replace it, rivalry did. If a county built a new brick courthouse, neighboring counties also had to have a brick building. There seems to have been a standard plan for these new brick courthouses. Each was a plain structure, about thirty-four feet square, two stories high, with hip roof, good-sized cupola and often a bell. The first floor had offices on opposite sides of a hall in which was the stairway to the second floor. On the second floor was the circuit court room, a sort of lobby, and a small room or two. It may be that some of these ante-bellum brick courthouses are still serving the people of Egypt.

Courthouse architecture had a rebirth following the Civil War. Many of the county courthouses of that period may still be

seen, but a fourth period is upon us. Suffice it to say that these later types emphasize wonderful progress in both beauty and utility—evidences of cultural advancement.

As early as 1840 the Greek column was introduced into Egyptian architecture. In that year, the Bank of Illinois, one branch of which was located in Shawneetown, erected in that promising young city a large and beautiful brown stone bank building, two stories high with appropriately carved stone cornice and massive pediment supported by five majestic fluted columns. This old brown stone building was a missionary in Egypt a hundred years ago. You will find the influence of this building and its Greek columns in many of the public structures erected in the last century—in courthouses, in public libraries, in colleges, in churches, and even in private homes.

Nothing shows cultural progress in southern Illinois more certainly than the changes in the architectural design from the simple log cabins to the beautiful public buildings and the elegant private homes now to be seen throughout the length and breadth of Egypt.

CULTURAL VALUE OF THE PRINTING PRESS

Along with schools and churches as agencies of culture and of progress in the betterment of the life of our people, we may place the printing press—and newspapers, books, and magazines. There should be set up no claim to brilliancy in literary production for Egypt. Most of the products of the press of the first half of the last century pertained to the realistic problems in the planting of homes, and churches, and schools, and in politics connected with the founding of the new state. The special mission of the newspapers was the advancement of the material interest of the state. Books other than those of the nature of chronicles, require a form of leisure and time, and few books with an imprint prior to the middle of the last century are to be found in any of our libraries.

Morris Birkbeck, though an English immigrant, wrote articles and letters in praise of America, and especially of Illinois as a home for the oppressed of his native land. He furnished to the press powerful arguments in favor of freedom during the struggle to make Illinois a slave state in 1824. These articles and his letters were put into book form and published in England and in France. His writings have been adjudged as having real literary merit.

Professor John Russell was an eastern man with a college education and a wide experience in writing and teaching prior to his coming to Illinois in 1828. He settled in Bluffdale, which is under the bluffs, a romantic place ten miles west of Carrollton in Greene County. The village was sheltered by high overhanging rocky bluffs. Professor Russell taught in Shurtleff College. He is said to have been a brilliant scholar familiar with several modern languages. He wrote *The Worm of the Still.*

The Reverend John M. Peck, a great Baptist leader, was the most active educated man in early Egypt. He wrote *Guide for Emigrants* and a brief gazetteer of the state. He was bitterly opposed to human slavery.

Judge James Hall settled in Shawneetown and later lived in Vandalia. He wrote western stories that were published far and wide. He founded the *Illinois Monthly Magazine,* which ranked well for so early a period.

But perhaps it was left to Miss Sarah Marshall of Shawneetown to produce the best novel that Egypt can claim credit for in the last century. The title, *Early Marriages,* may have sounded out a popular philosophy. Mrs. Abraham Lincoln read it half through at one sitting. Miss Marshall became the wife of Judge Hayden, a resident of Washington, D. C., where she was known for her literary work and especially for her short poems.

By a slight extension of the imagination Egypt might lay claim to the noted novelist, Mary Hartwell Catherwood. Tradition says that she lived for a time in the stone mansion of Professor Russell, under the bluffs on the lower Illinois. Mrs.

Catherwood wrote historical novels and romances with many of the scenes laid in southern Illinois.

CONTRIBUTION OF PUBLIC MEN

The public men—more especially the politicians—of Illinois who were active prior to the middle of the last century made important contributions toward the advancement of culture, though their help may not have been as direct as that of others of our people. These public men were connected with the government—governors, legislators, and judges. They made the laws which brought the digging of canals, building of railroads, and other public enterprises. In this way they helped to create a demand for public employment, induced immigration, and thus created millions of dollars' worth of taxable wealth in the state. Poverty and culture may and often do live under the same roof, but culture cannot make rapid progress under the handicap of poverty. Wealth and culture may be of mutual advantage to each other. One way to foster the growth of culture is to foster the growth of private and public wealth, because it is only when talent, genius, and ambition are released from grinding toil that ideas and ideals can be realized.

EVIDENCES OF CULTURE

Evidence of the presence of a cultured people in Egypt at an early day was to be found in their homes, and in many cases it may still be observed, though the antique hunter has been abroad in the land. A half hundred years ago I was a guest in an old home in Egypt. In every room in that home there were precious pieces of furniture. There were beautiful hand-carved mantels above the fireplaces, French plate mirrors were appropriately placed, mahogany rockers, dressers, chests, and four-poster beds, chairs, beautiful tables and bric-a-brac seemed in profusion. Many of these pieces are now for sale, in the hands of antique collectors. I know that there are many homes in Egypt now

where there are abundant evidences of culture and refinement that exerted their potent influences upon the young people in those homes a hundred years ago.

Many years ago—a hundred or more—a young lady, a graduate of a finishing school in the State of New York came with her parents into this new west and lived in a double log house just beyond the northern border of Egypt. The young lady, before starting on her long journey, securely packed away in the wagon a full-length French plate mirror. This was an heirloom. She also tucked away the costly silk which was to be used for her wedding dress. After a few years happily spent in the double log cabin, the eventful day arrived, and the young lady stood before that full-length mirror and made final adjustment of roses and curls.

It is not intended to convey the idea that such incidents were common in the wilderness life in southern Illinois. But there were similar occasions. Who can estimate the far-reaching cultural influence of even a few such families scattered about in the settled portions of our state in an early day?

EGYPT'S PHYSICAL CONTRIBUTION

It is not an unjustifiable claim that physical Egypt has been sympathetic and helpful in promoting cultural ideals. What is the real meaning of the story of the "Great Stone Face?" What is the teaching of nature everywhere? Nature has furnished the basis for all that man has been able to contribute to the culture of his race.

Just before the days of the Civil War, Richard Cobden, the great English statesman, was visiting in the United States. On a journey over the Illinois Central Railroad from Chicago to New Orleans, he detrained at South Pass, a small station in the lowest gap of the western Ozarks. He was driven to Bell's Hill, a near-by place in the surrounding hills. From this high point he could see the farms, orchards, hills, and valleys before and below

him. It was a great surprise to the Englishman to find a view like this in the great Prairie State of Illinois. On his return to the train at the village station, he was very enthusiastic in his praises of the beautiful view from Bell's Hill. The native villagers were so pleased with his visit that they asked the Illinois Central Railroad to change the name of the station from South Pass to Cobden and this was done.

The first people who came to southern Illinois, as we have tried to show, were many of them cultured people. They brought not only culture with them but the native endowment to produce without delay many cultural manifestations. Poets, painters, and sculptors rarely seek out the solitudes of the great plains when they wish to bring forth their masterpieces. On the other hand, they find in the companionship of hills and valleys, of lakes and forests, of mountain streams and waterfalls, in the chirp of small birds and insects, the inspiration for cultural manifestations.

Culture must be manifested in, and her richest fruitage must come originally from, the regions where nature presents her greatest varieties. Nature's cultural stimulants are well distributed over southern Illinois. We may see and study them in a well-planned pilgrimage of our Egypt. These natural phenomena are so intermingled with the evidences of the life of our people that it will be difficult to observe the former without giving some attention to the latter.

A pilgrimage may begin in a study of the great bluffs along the lower course of the Illinois River. It is here under the bluffs that we find the century old stone mansion, the home of Professor John Russell, the greatest Illinois scholar of the first half of the last century. And here, in this romantic retreat, tradition says that Mary Hartwell Catherwood wrote some of her most charming Egyptian stories. Proceeding down the Illinois and the Mississippi we pass the historic Piasa Bluffs where Father Marquette saw, before the destructive hand of the white man destroyed it, the prehistoric painting, the "Piasa Monster." A few miles down the river is Alton with its imposing Lovejoy monument which pro-

claims that even in Egypt one man has been willing to give his life for the right of free speech and a free press.

Along the river's edge of the American Bottom the pilgrimage will bring us to the world famous Monks' Mound. Here we may pause and hear another story of devotion, duty, and death. Farther on we pass old Cahokia, the village which played such a large part in Egypt when "Wilderness was King." Farther down the Father of Waters we pass Prairie Du Rocher, the oldest town in Illinois, and should without fail visit Fort Chartres, the "Louisburg of the West." The view of the "Rocks by the Prairie" from the parade ground of the fort will long be remembered.

The pilgrimage will soon reach Kaskaskia, Fort Gage, and we may see the antics of the Father of Waters in giving to Missouri a large part of the soil of Illinois without asking the consent of the sovereign people of Illinois. Here are the facts and the traditions which lie waiting, the basis of the most charming story ever written in the Middle West. The tour will carry us past Thebes, probably one of the oldest courthouses in Illinois, where Lincoln practiced law with some of Egypt's greatest lawyers.[2] We are now in the delta regions of Cairo, and we turn our course up the beautiful Ohio—the river made famous by the travels of Charles Dickens, General Wilkinson, Aaron Burr, General Jackson, General Grant, and General Lafayette. Soon we enter the broken ridges of the Ozarks. We pass the world famous spar mines, iron mines nearly a century old, and an extinct volcano. Farther north are the rolling uplands of the Wabash and beyond are the widening prairies of the northern border of Egypt. We have traveled in a great circle around the most wonderful part of Egypt, the highlands of the Ozarks. And hidden away among its high ridges is the state's most charming playground, the Giant City State Park. Here the state has joined her skill and her resources with the gifts of nature to produce one of the finest recreation and study centers in our great state.

[2] Again the Editor disagrees with the author on a matter of Lincoln minutiae.

It was here in Egypt among her lakes, hills, streams, valleys, and forests that the people who settled Illinois lived close to nature and drank deep from the fountains of truth, and love, and beauty. Here culture had a new birth and though it may have had a humble beginning, it has had a steady and vigorous growth, and Egypt's people have made generous and loving contributions of their culture to the life of the whole people of our beloved commonwealth.

ROBERT GREEN INGERSOLL

By C. H. CRAMER*

"Moderation is best. . . . avoid all extremes." Thus spoke Plutarch. His platitudinous but sage advice has never been followed by the advocates and antagonists of Robert Green Ingersoll. To his friends The Great Agnostic was a paragon of virtue, a beau ideal. One of his biographers modestly affirms that he possessed "at once the language of Shakespeare, the tenderness of Burns, the justice and wisdom of Lincoln."[1] A professor of Greek asserts, with confidence, that "if Demosthenes was ever as eloquent as Ingersoll, he was never properly reported."[2] A resolute admirer claims that he had powers of legerdemain. He writes: "The Church has fired man into hell; Ingersoll fired hell out of man. At last the miracle of casting out devils has been performed."[3]

To his enemies Bob Ingersoll was an agent of Satan for whom they reserved their choicest vituperative sallies. He was a Devil Incarnate, a roaring lion, walking about, seeking whom he might devour, carrying on the work of anti-Christ on earth.

What are we to believe?

What was Robert Green Ingersoll really like?

Family letters, recently purchased by the Illinois State Historical Library, point to an answer.[4] Some of them were written

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[1] Herman E. Kittredge, *Ingersoll; A Biographical Appreciation* (New York, 1911), 3.

[2] *Ibid.*, 86.

[3] Edward Garstin Smith, *The Life and Reminiscences of Robert G. Ingersoll* (New York, 1904), 171.

[4] There are two collections: (1) Ingersoll and various relatives—102

by his father, the Reverend John Ingersoll; most are correspondence between Robert and his impecunious brother John in Wisconsin, and John's two daughters, Ruth and Mary. They indicate a warm-hearted personality, filled with more than the usual amount of sentiment. Letters written by father and sons are more than affectionate; at times they are replete with protestations which can be best described as gushing. They show that The Great Agnostic loved and respected his preacher father, and adored his own wife and children and brothers. They manifest his belief that love for family, and Heaven, are synonymous terms. They reveal his worry about old age and death—because both would interfere with his happy family life—the only Heaven of which he was certain.

Robert's story of his early training indicates, to be sure, scant sympathy for the religion of his father. He was a very young man when he wrote from Peoria to his brother John in Wisconsin:

> There is little going on but religion. Nothing heard of but prayer meetings though I think they are dying out a little now. As soon as times get good people will stop praying and go to preying.[5]

And from Mt. Vernon this lament:

> Today I heard a Cumberland Presbyterian minister spout whose only peculiarities were a want of sense and an extremely big and ill shaped nose.[6]

Many years later, in his famous lecture on "Some Mistakes of Moses," he echoed this idea when he asked for preachers who were not owls hooting "the same old hoots that have been hooted for eighteen hundred years."[7] He reminisced that he had learned,

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letters and miscellaneous papers, July 1, 1850 to October 11, 1901, acquired by the Library in 1936; (2) family letters between Robert and his father, his brother John, and his nieces Ruth and Mary, dated from 1849 to 1899 —243 in number, acquired in 1938.

[5] May 6, 1858.

[6] To John Ingersoll, Jan. 16, 1853.

[7] *The Works of Robert G. Ingersoll,* edited by C. P. Farrell (New Dresden ed., in 12 vols.; New York, 1900), II: 16. Hereafter referred to as *Works.*

as a boy, to regard religion not as the hope by which men sustain themselves when those they love have gone, but as a bleak force, killing all joys of life. He said:

> The minister asked us if we knew that we all deserved to go to hell, and we all answered "Yes." Then we were asked if we would be willing to go to hell if it was God's will, and every little liar shouted "Yes." . . . After that, we started for home, sad and solemn—overpowered with the wisdom displayed in the scheme of the atonement. When we got home, if we had been good boys, and the weather was warm, sometimes they would take us out to the graveyard and cheer us up a little. It did cheer me. When I looked at the sunken tombs and the leaning stones, and read the half-effaced inscriptions through the moss of silence and forgetfulness, it was a great comfort.[8]

The Reverend John Ingersoll was a frenetic and lovable old gentleman with a "Presbyterian pair of eyes, set in Calvinistic sockets."[9] He was consumed with love for his God (an avenging One) and a hatred for slavery. He pictured Hell and the South so vividly, and synonymously, that he never stayed very long in a pastorate. In his letters to his sons he loved them and worried about them. He fretted about Clark and Robert, who were not as decided Christians as they should have been, and asked orthodox John to "pray much for these your dear young brothers."[10] Most of his homiletical correspondence closes with sentiments like the following:

> God bless my well-beloved son. . . . O John I repeat it I hope you are happy let the world go which way it will.

Another letter ends thus:

> My love to you is without *bounds*. . . . I well know you love your poor old grey-headed Father now in his 60th year.[11]

[8] *Works*, I: 379.
[9] Smith, *Ingersoll*, 6.
[10] Rev. John Ingersoll to son John, Greenville, Ill., July 5, 1851.
[11] Father to son John, Madison, Ohio, Oct. 8, 1850 and Greenville, Ill., July 5, 1851.

Robert Ingersoll appreciated his father's affection, and developed the same attitude in his own family relationships. The correspondence shows clearly, as we have seen, his contempt for orthodox religion. It proves, with the same clarity, that he did not hold a personal grudge against its votaries, and that he loved and pitied his bumbling father. Bob was the Benjamin to his father, whose "heart was bound up in the lad."[12] The son, in turn, was worried but critical about the Reverend John Ingersoll. He wrote from Peoria in 1858:

> Dear father . . . is still adrift. I do not know what is to be done—after a little while I want him to come here and live with us—but some way he cannot content himself unless preaching, and as he writes me he has been preaching in revivals all winter. . . . They have prayer meetings in this city in almost every church every day and night. From all accounts all over the country I suppose God has heard more nonsense in the last six months than he ever heard before in the whole course of his life, and by this time likely again repents that he ever made man—at least with the power of speech.[13]

Many years later, when Robert had only a few years to live, he grew misty-eyed as he thought of his affectionate father. He wrote to John:

> Dear, dear father, filled with love for his children, anxious every moment that they were out of his sight. How much he suffered, how hard his life was, and how much he loved. How I wish he could have lived for many happy years. How happy it would have made me to have made him happy.[14]

The boys felt the same affection for each other. One of John's boys was named for his Uncle Robert. The child died, and Robert wrote this letter, orthodox in tone because he knew that it would comfort the orthodox and grief-stricken parent:

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[12] Letter from his step-mother, F. W. Ingersoll (teacher at a seminary in Mt. Vernon, Ill.) to son John, Mt. Vernon, April 20, 1853.

[13] Robert to John, Peoria, March 23, 1858.

[14] Robert to John, Dobbs' Ferry-on-Hudson, Aug. 20, 1895.

Death is becoming familiar in our family. Only a few days and we will have to join the dear ones on the other side. Another voice is calling you to heaven. You have one reason less for wishing to live. . . .

I wish I could be with you. Anything that I can write is poor and cold compared to what I feel. . . . No matter how old you get . . . you will always have a sweet babe in your hearts.

I can only say May the God of our Father be with you and give you strength to bear your great affliction. Kiss your dear children for me. I send more than love to you, my dear brother.[15]

The death of Congressman Ebon Clark Ingersoll was a hard blow to the family. As is well known, Robert delivered the oration at the funeral—an oration which has become an elegiac classic. At the time, he wrote to John:

I wish you could be here. The world looks dark to me. We were not only brothers, we were friends. We were not only friends, but we were lovers.[16]

One year later, on the anniversary of Clark's death, he wrote again:

To-day is a sad day in the years of our lives hereafter. Poor dear Clark! I think of him every waking moment, and most of my dreams are of him. Well, it will soon be over with us all. A moment more and our flesh is clay.

Give our love . . . to each and all. I would like to hold you in my arms to-day. Goodbye my dear brother. I love you and yours.[17]

The fraternal affection was more than epistolary in character. It had its practical side as well. John did his best to make a living as a physician and farmer, but that best was none too good. Robert often sent money to him, enclosing bills in the envelope. In 1890 he wrote a typical letter of inquiry:

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[15] Robert to John, Peoria, Aug. 30, 1865.
[16] Robert to John, Washington, D. C., June 1, 1879.
[17] Chicago, May 31, 1880.

> How are you fixed for the winter? Have you plenty of coal? Tell the truth, because I want to *know* that you are all warm and that you have plenty inside and out.[18]

The Great Agnostic felt the same solicitude and love for his own wife and children. His marriage was uncommonly happy—so much so that his eulogistic biographers go into a state of rapturous ecstasy about it. One of them avers:

> It meant thirty-seven years of unalloyed happiness to both husband and wife; and also to the children, to all the relatives, friends, and servants; and even to cats, dogs, and poultry that moved within this charmed and charming circle.[19]

In spite of such hyperbolic nonsense, it *was* a happy marriage. Ingersoll wrote in 1881:

> To-morrow I shall have been married nineteen years, and they have been happy years to me. My wedding day was the most fortunate of my life. No man ever had a better, truer sweeter wife. She has been the star and anchor of my life. But for her I should have been a wreck among the rocks.[20]

Many of us are inclined to believe that, while all wife-beaters may not be agnostics, it is indubitably true that all agnostics are wife-beaters. In the philosophy of Robert Ingersoll, such a thing could not be. Dubious about a life after death, he magnified the importance of existence in the here and now. The inevitable consequence was that he put the home on a pedestal, knelt humbly before it, and worshipped there. He said:

> Let me tell you . . . it is far more important to build a home than to erect a church. The holiest temple beneath the stars is a home that love has built. And the holiest altar in all the wide world is the fireside around which gather father and mother and sweet babes.[21]

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[18] New York, Dec. 2, 1890.
[19] Smith, *Ingersoll*, 32-33.
[20] Robert to John, Washington, Feb. 12, 1881.
[21] *Works*, I: 468.

In later life, he came to believe that love and Heaven were synonymous terms:

> If there is any heaven in this world it is in the family. It is where the wife loves the husband and the husband loves the wife, and where the dimpled arms of children are about the necks of both. That is heaven if there is any.

To his niece Mary, John's daughter, he wrote in 1898, shortly before his own death:

> Death seems terrible, frightful, awful, and yet if there were no death, there would be no love. The fear, the certainty of loss feeds and makes sacred the flame of love.

And shortly afterwards he wrote her:

> To have lived & loved and been loved—that is about all. The night must come.[22]

His comments on politics are a striking contrast to this idealistic view of the home and family. Here the vein is pure pessimism, unalloyed with virtue and ecstasy. This can be explained by bad luck in his political prospecting—his failure to get the nomination for Governor of Illinois (at least partially because of his unorthodoxy), his defense of tainted defendants in the Star Route scandal, the failure of the Plumed Knight from Maine to live up to the sobriquet which Ingersoll gave him.

At the close of the Civil War, when he was interested in state politics, he wrote John:

> If there is any life in the world that is absolutely devoid of everything like real happiness, I believe it is what is called a political life. A low, dirty scramble, through misrepresentation slander falsehood and filth, and success brings nothing but annoyance and fear of defeat next time, and yet if one gets started in that kind of business it is very hard to get out. I find myself planning & scheming all the time, thinking what I will try for, and calculating the chances. I was at Springfield several weeks during the sitting of the Legis-

[22] Dobbs' Ferry-on-Hudson, July 2 and Aug. 19, 1898.

> lature & I suppose a more scaly set of one-horse thieves and low-lived political tricksters never assembled on the earth. The thing called *law* I am daily losing respect for, and I think that Congress is but little better than our own legislature.[23]

Fourteen years later his suspicions about the national government had been confirmed. He wanted his nephew to visit Washington to see "how small the great men really are."[24] His own profession, the law, was no better. He once described his office this way: "We have a very nice office & lighted with gas. Gas you know is an excellent thing in law, in fact indispensable."[25]

As he watched the Republican captains and kings depart—the fanfare silenced and the accoutrement shabby and worn—he realized that most of them had been superficial warriors at best, and that some were venal masqueraders. He was able to rationalize that it was perhaps best that he had not gone far politically. On New Year's Day, 1885, shortly after the country had gone to the dogs by electing Grover Cleveland, he wrote John:

> The principal subject of conversation here is the condition of Genl. Grant. A great many think that he ought to suffer and the worse the better. He is looked upon as a public burden. What a terrible ending for his career. His bitterest enemy ought to be satisfied. Blaine is sinking out of sight. Most people here say that he has had his day and should now stand aside. I think of the men whom I have known who have had power and are now at the bottom of the ladder. The public is a kind of strumpet after all. Better a crust with contentment than a "busted" politician without a crust. It makes me glad, as I look around at the wrecks, that I was never popular enough to get office.

These statements make it clear that political life was not the Good Life for Robert Ingersoll. His trust, as we have seen, was placed in the home. There were only two things which could interfere with his heaven on earth—and they were age and death. He worried about both.

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[23] Peoria, March 17, 1865.
[24] Washington, July 13, 1879.
[25] Peoria, Feb. 26, 1858.

In the third decade of his life a few gray hairs began to show up, and it disturbed him frightfully. He wrote John that he hated to get old—that no thought was more dreadful to him than that of getting old, except death. He pined for the Elixir of Youth![26]

When he was still in his twenties, it seemed to him that life was almost over. To John he lamented:

> We are growing old so fast. Life has hardly commenced with us & yet it seems to me that we are over the top & are going down on the other side. In a few days I shall be thirty years old. And yet I have accomplished absolutely nothing & now it seems that there will scarcely be time enough to accomplish anything of moment. It is almost too late to begin.[27]

Five years later, he wrote again to John:

> I will soon be thirty-five. The world is nearly over for you and I. What a farce!

Twenty years slipped by, and there wasn't much hair, gray or otherwise, on what he called his "roof." He wrote again to John:

> Think of it. 55. That seems on the edge of the antique. In a little while ivy will be running up my legs. There is not much boy in 55. The house is getting out of repair—*shingles off the roof,* but ruins are interesting.[28]

Ten years later, at the age of sixty-five, he weighed 255 pounds, and was solidly mired in the old age which had surrounded him forty years before. He wrote:

> You see I am approaching the dusk. The sun is sinking in the West, and the shadows are growing long. Well, I am going to enjoy the evening, and a good long one, I hope.[29]

He tried dieting—no starch and sugar—and lost sixty-seven pounds and took ten inches off his waistline.[30] It wasn't much

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[26] Peoria, March 23, 1858.
[27] Groveland, June 2, 1863.
[28] New York, Aug. 11, 1888.
[29] To Mary and Ruth Ingersoll, New York, Aug. 10, 1889.
[30] To John, Dobbs' Ferry-on-Hudson, June 2, 1897.

fun. He reported that he suffered "like a martyr—hungry all the time—stomach as empty as a broken bank."[31] It was a temporary palliative. One year later he was dead.

[31] To John, Dobbs' Ferry-on-Hudson, March 24, 1898.

THE GREAT CHICAGO FIRE, OCTOBER 8-10, 1871

By H. A. MUSHAM*

PREFACE

The Great Fire of October 8 to 10, 1871, is without doubt the outstanding event in the history of Chicago. So sudden was the visitation, so complete the destruction it achieved, and so magnificently awesome the spectacle it presented to the frightened people, that it etched an indelible though blurred impression on their minds—a picture which time was never able to erase. Every one of the 334,270 people in Chicago on those fateful days had a story to tell, and they never tired of telling it. For years afterwards it was the principal topic of discussion around the fireplace or kitchen stove, or wherever and whenever people gathered. The ruins were hardly cool before the presses were turning out a deluge of pamphlets, books and prints telling of the fire in detail from its start to its finish. Enterprising photographers took quantities of photographs of the ruins. The result was an immense amount of information, so large in fact that at the time it defied analysis. The accounts disagree almost unanimously as to details. Only one effort was made to take observations of scientific value, and that was by Sergeant Theodore Mosher, Jr., of the United States Weather Office of the Signal Corps of the Army. One attempt was made to analyze the fire and that was not carried through to completion. So it is very difficult to determine just what happened at critical points of the fire.

After severe criticism and much urging the Board of Police in the Fire Department held an open official investigation from

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November 23 to December 4, 1871. It examined some fifty witnesses, and disclosed considerable information of value, but apparently ignored many pertinent facts. It did not of course want to assume the responsibility for what had happened nor did it want to put it on the city administration. It was evidently unwilling to fix the blame. This is of course to be regretted as the Board was the one body that could have got to the bottom of things.

This account of the fire is an attempt to do this very thing. It is as complete as the available information permits it to be. There is very little agreement as to the hour the fire started or the times it struck various points throughout its progress from De Koven Street to Fullerton Avenue. Consequently it has been necessary to make minor adjustments throughout, particularly in fixing the times the critical phases took place. Careful consideration has been given to the weather conditions at the time and the effect they may have had on the fire. A picture of the fire more or less complete is the result. If any reader has any data which will throw additional light upon the fire the author will deem it a favor if he be permitted to examine it in order that any points which may be in dispute may be settled.

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H. A. Musham

PART I. BEFORE THE FIRE

CHICAGO IN 1871

The site of Chicago is a low flat plain lying but a few feet above the lake. It is drained by the Chicago River and its North and South branches, which join about three quarters of a mile from

the lake to form the main stream. The river and its branches divide the city into three divisions, known officially in 1871 as the North, West and South divisions, but commonly as the North, West and South sides.

The government of the city was in that year practically the same in form as it is today. Mayor Roswell B. Mason had been elected in 1869 and his term of office was to expire in the fall of the year. The city government occupied part of the Courthouse at Randolph and Clark streets.

In 1870 Chicago was the fifth largest city in the country. In 1871 it was the fourth, having jostled St. Louis, its great rival, from that exalted position, and it was looking forward with confidence to taking Brooklyn's place as the third in the course of the next ten years. As an organized municipality it was but thirty-eight years old and its rise from a miserable settlement of 175 buildings in a swamp on both sides of a sluggish creek was the wonder of the age. The population was 334,270, about one-half native born Americans, the other half emigrants, practically all from northern Europe. The Germans and Irish predominated, the former comprising about one-sixth of the total population, the latter one-eighth. There were also numbers of Swedes, Norwegians and Bohemians, as well as a scattering of other nationalities in the city.

With few exceptions, all these people were hard-working, industrious folk who asked nothing more than a chance to make good. A third of the population was engaged in gainful employment in professional and personal capacities, in transportation, construction or in working in some of the 1,149 factories which annually turned out a great variety of goods with a value of about $89,000,000. Chicago's commerce and industries were growing at a tremendous rate; the increase during the preceding decade, for commerce, was 311 per cent and for industry 533 per cent.[1]

The port was very busy. More vessels arrived at Chicago in

[1] *Ninth Census of the United States, 1870.*

1871 than at New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Charleston, San Francisco and Mobile combined, although their tonnage was considerably less. No less than 12,330 vessels with a total tonnage of 3,096,101 arrived in that year, or an average of about one every fifteen minutes during the summer months. Six hundred and fifty vessels were owned in the city, of which 84 were steamers, 333 sailing ships, and 233 were barges and canal boats.[2] There were 13 miles of wooden docks and piers along the river, its branches and slips. The river was crossed by 24 swing bridges, usually of the bowstring type with wooden trusses carrying wooden roadways and sidewalks. There was a tunnel under the main river for vehicles and pedestrians at LaSalle Street and another under the South Branch at Washington Street.

Ten railroads came into the city from the East, South and West, and more were planning to enter. These ships and railroads brought to the city the manufactured goods of the East, as well as lumber, coal and grain, and they took away the products of Chicago factories and the grain of the Middle West. The railroad depots, excepting one, were located on or near the river as were their freight yards and sheds. All of these were of wood, brick or stone, or brick and wood combination, with wood predominating in most instances. Along the river were seventeen large elevators, huge structures of wood or brick and wood, capable of holding 12,000,000 bushels of grain. Chicago in 1871 was the transportation, grain and manufacturing center for the West and Northwest.

Along the river or on nearby streets were numerous lumber and wood yards, wood working plants such as saw mills, planing mills, shingle mills, sash and door mills, and furniture factories. Practically all of these were of wood and in many cases without basements, the buildings being built directly on the ground or raised on posts above it. Underneath the first floor some were open to the full sweep of the wind. These mills and factories used large amounts of wood in their operations and usually had quanti-

[2] A. T. Andreas, *History of Chicago* (Chicago, 1885), II: 73.

ties of it stored in the yards about them. In some cases there were large amounts of finished products in the yards, as well as high piles of mill ends and waste materials. West of the river was the machinery and machine shop district. The business district was located on the South Side between Monroe Street on the south, Michigan Avenue on the east, the River on the north and the South Branch on the west. The center of this area was the Courthouse Square.

Lake Street was the shopping center of the town, although several large stores were to be found on State Street. On these streets were retail stores the equal of any in the country with the possible exception of the larger ones in New York and Philadelphia. Wholesale stores were located on Wabash Avenue. Their counters, shelves and storerooms were loaded with goods of all kinds. Whether the Middle West wanted luxuries or the mere necessities of life, Chicago was prepared to furnish them.

The better buildings in the business district were generally three to five stories high. The highest of all was the new Palmer House which had eight. Many of them had wooden mansard top stories which in some cases were fronts only. Cupolas and towers were common. The buildings were usually of brick with brick, stone or marble street fronts. Some of the more pretentious had ornamental cast-iron fronts. Large wooden signs were hung on many of them and canvas and wooden awnings were common. Large amounts of wood were used in their construction and in their fittings, shelving and furniture. In only a small number were the doors and windows on the rear fitted with iron safety shutters.

The district was not solidly built up, there being many vacant lots. Numerous one and two story frame buildings, singly or in rows, were scattered about or next to or between the more pretentious structures. South of Monroe Street were numbers of one, two, three, or four storied frame store buildings; often living quarters were provided above the first floor. Brick veneer walls were common, at times running up three and four stories. The near north division, just north of the line of lumber yards and east of

State Street, was the old residential section of the city. Here were found the pretentious homes of the early pioneers who had bought property on the right bank of the river or who had made their fortunes through their energy and business acumen. These homes were usually of frame construction with large porches and cupolas. In many cases they were set back in the center of the block or on a large lot in the midst of trees and were often surrounded with wooden picket fences. This neighborhood had an air of charm reminiscent of an old New England town.

On the West Side, in the neighborhood of Union Square, was another fine residential district and along Wabash and Michigan avenues were many fine homes. Those in humbler circumstances lived where they could find accommodations—for the most part in frame houses, cottages and shanties, near the place of work of the breadwinner of the family. This was particularly the case on the North Side, north and west of the section occupied by the early settlers and also on the West Side near the river where the greater number of the laboring people lived.

All these dwellings, factories and transportation facilities occupied an area of 36 square miles. There were 534 miles of streets, 88 of which were paved. Of these, 57 miles were paved with wooden blocks. The streets of the business district were all paved, some with stone boulders or cobblestones. There were no mudholes downtown in 1871. The sidewalks, of which there were 561 miles, were all of wood, with the exception of a few short stretches of stone flags. Away from the business district these wooden sidewalks were often raised above the ground on wooden posts.

The city was lighted by gas supplied by two companies, one with its main plant and office on Market Street between Monroe and Adams, and a branch plant on the north side at Hawthorne Avenue and Haines Street. The other company had its plant on West 22nd Street. The streets were lighted by 6,555 gas lamps which were turned on in the evening and shut off at dawn.

The city was amply supplied with water by a waterworks

Courtesy of Chicago Historical Society

WATER TOWER AND WATERWORKS BEFORE THE FIRE

located at Chicago Avenue and the lake in a castellated structure which had been completed but a few years previously. There were three large walking beam pumps, with a capacity of 38,000,000 gallons per day, which drew water from the lake through a tunnel running out under the bottom to a crib about a mile directly off shore. Just west of the pump house, fronting on Pine Street, was the 175 foot water tower which was used to feed water to the city when the pumps were shut down. The people were very proud of their waterworks and placed great reliance on them as a source of water for fire protection.

THE FIRE DEPARTMENT

The safety of the city was entrusted to a Board of Police chosen at the general elections. This Board handled all matters relating to the Police and Fire departments, the funds for their support being appropriated by the Common Council and raised by taxation. In 1871 the Commissioners were Thomas B. Brown, Mark Sheridan and Frederick W. Gund. In the Police Department there were but 425 men to preserve order in the fastest growing city in the world, a city that was the mecca for all kinds of people, good and bad. The Council had a penchant for economy, especially in the wrong places, one of which was the Fire Department.

The fire limits, that is the boundaries of the area in which the construction of buildings was governed by regulation to prevent the construction of unsafe structures and fire hazards, were of limited extent. On the South Side they included the area bounded by: 22nd Street from the lake to State Street, State to 12th, 12th to Clark, Clark to Van Buren Street, Van Buren to LaSalle, LaSalle to Adams, Adams to the South Branch and along the South Branch and the main river to the lake. On the West Side, they included the area between Lake and Madison streets east of Halsted to the South Branch and that between Madison and Van Buren streets east of Clinton to the South Branch. On

the North Side they included the area between Illinois Street and the river, and 100 foot strips on each side of Wells and all parallel streets to the east, these strips running north as far as Chicago Avenue. These areas, small as they were, had been secured with difficulty and over the protests of the citizens who opposed their extension and wished to curtail them. On this matter, the Board expressed itself as follows:

> Private interests impel men to disregard the rights of the public, and if we wait till everybody thinks their interests will be promoted by having fire limits, we fear we shall wait a great while, and suffer from many devastating fires in the interval. It is a poor reason for failing to extend the fire limits over at least six square miles of the city, that it will be a hardship for the poor men owning lots within this area, to be compelled to build in such a manner, that a fire in their own premises will not endanger all the property in the block; for the number of poor men who own lots of land worth per front foot from $200 to $3,500, are, and must be, very few. It will be found on inquiry, that most of the wooden rookeries in the heart of the city, are owned by non-residents, speculators, or non-progressive citizens, of abundant means, who in the greater number of instances obtain large rents for their miserable buildings from gamblers, prostitutes and kindred characters; such rents as no persons following honest callings could afford to pay. We have been earnestly endeavoring for several years past to have an extension of the fire limits, believing if it could be obtained, that property would be less liable to loss from fire; that rates of insurance would thereby be much reduced, and thus decrease the expenses of doing business. There has always been much opposition to this measure. In order to obviate any objections which are made by the owners of vacant lots or of lots now having wooden buildings upon them, we now recommend, that all of the South Division which is bounded north by the Chicago River, east by the lake, west by the South Branch, and south by Twelfth Street, east of the west line of lots fronting east on Clark Street and north of Twenty-second Street; all that part of the North Division which is south of the north line of lots fronting south on Chicago Avenue, all that part of the West Division which is north of Twelfth Street, south of Chicago

Avenue, and east of the west line of lots fronting east on Halsted Street, be placed under the fire ordinances; giving to the owners or lessees of any lots of land, within such parts of the territory thus brought within the fire limits, the right to build upon such lots, or to repair wooden buildings, not exceeding twelve feet in height above the grade of the street, not more than twenty-five feet in width, and not exceeding sixty feet in length. In addition to this, we would allow the owners of a majority of the number of front feet upon any block, or half of a block in the city, who wished to insure that particular block or half block, to be well improved with safe buildings, to place such property under the provisions of the fire ordinances, by certifying that fact to the city clerk, and to the Boards of Police and Public Works.[3]

The Board fully understood that the building construction of the city was very, very bad. In its report for 1868 it stated:

Our fire ordinances require revision in several important respects. Those who witnessed the great Lake Street fire, Jan. 28, 1868 and saw the flames leap across the street, as they many times did, and catch upon the huge wooden cornices of the buildings, or upon the long wooden signs extending across the fronts of stores, between the windows, and on the tops of buildings, will wonder that such tinder traps are allowed by our present ordinance. Skylights made of thin brittle Pittsburgh glass, are unsafe, are frequently used, and should be prohibited. Stone and brick walls should be built during the season of the year in which the mortar or cement used will set and gradually harden and cleave to, and not from, the stone or brick in the wall. Many of these walls are partially or wholly built in the winter, with the thermometer at zero, and the mortar freezing as it is laid upon the wall. When buildings with walls constructed of brick, laid with this frozen mortar, get on fire, or a strong wind blows them down, the brick and mortar fall in separate pieces, the two having no cohesion whatsoever. No such building should be allowed by the ordinances.

As we have had occasion to remark in a previous report, the construction of division walls in business blocks, within

[3] *Report of the Board of Police in the Fire Department,* 1870, p. 89.

the fire limits, is in many instances very cheap and unsafe; the supports between the different stories are frequently of pine scantling lathed and plastered, and in case of fire these supports burn off, and the floors and roof as a consequence fall very early in the progress of the fire, making it dangerous for firemen to go into such buildings. Another class of buildings which are ordinarily called safe and substantial, are in fact unsafe from fire. These are the iron front blocks, built like Burch's block, recently burned on Lake Street, in which, the division walls, though of brick, do not meet the iron front by a considerable space; through these open spaces, fire is liable to be communicated from one store to another, as it was at the Lake Street fire, without possibility of stopping it until the whole block is consumed. An ordinance should be passed obliging owners of such buildings, to continue out to the iron front all division walls where such openings exist, and also to provide that all openings between adjoining stores or manufactories, within the fire limits, shall have fireproof doors and shutters, and that these be kept closed at night.

Although perhaps we may not have a safe cheap, and desirable substitute for the tar and gravel roofing, now so generally used on buildings, yet we suggest that the tar, as now used, when from any cause the gravel covering it becomes displaced, is very liable to be ignited by falling cinders from another fire, and thus extending a conflagration. The insurance companies can aid the city government in securing safety from fire by allowing no excessive insurance, by making a careful survey of premises before insuring them, and by discriminating in the rates of insurance between those which are, and those which are not safely constructed buildings, so as to make it an inducement for people to build more with reference to safety from fire. The style of constructing buildings throughout the city, is generally too unsubstantial. In many cases, ornament is substituted for strength, and safety is sacrificed for cheapness. In many buildings substantially constructed, which are of a public character, such as halls, churches, school houses, and hotels, there are no adequate provisions made for the speedy and safe exit of the multitude of people who may be within them at a time when an alarm of fire may be given, or a panic seize them. Without ample means of egress from these public places, hundreds of

lives will some day be lost in our city. In our opinion, the retailing as well as the use of firecrackers ought to be prohibited by ordinance, as we have previously advised your honorable body.[4]

Again in 1870 the Board remarked:

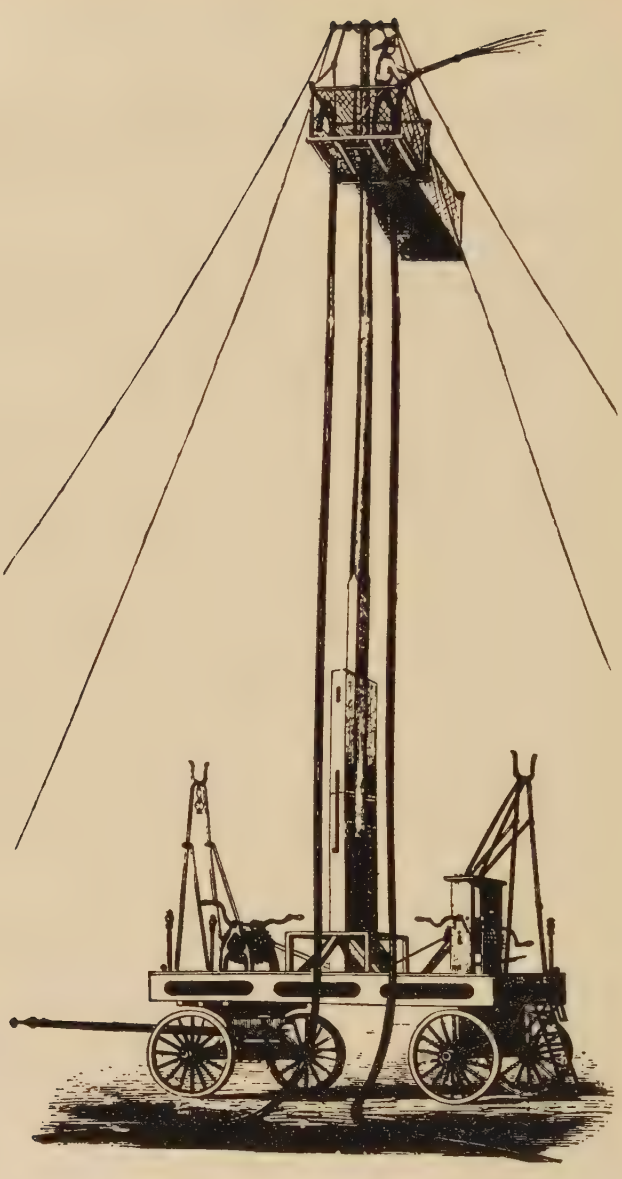
> At present there is very little encouragement to parties, who under other circumstances would build safe and substantial structures on account of the small area of the fire limits. People will continually build high wooden buildings in the very heart of the city if the ordinances will permit it.[5]

In 1868 the Board recommended that an ordinance be passed requiring plans of buildings to be submitted to the Board of Police or to some other officer under their control for their approval, to prevent violations of fire ordinances and encourage the erection of safe buildings.[6] The people and the Common Council appear to have paid little attention to these recommendations, for by 1871 apparently no changes had been made in building regulations nor were the fire limits extended. Property owners opposed all laws that would tend to improve building construction or limit the use of their property.

The city in these years also followed the bad practices of leasing street dead ends at the river, and of failing to enforce the ordinances requiring them to be kept clear of obstructions. Accordingly the river was not accessible to the Fire Department at many of the streets.

The Fire Department had a strength of 17 steam fire engine companies, 6 hose companies, 4 hook and ladder companies and 2 hose elevator companies, one of which was out of service. (See Appendix B). These companies and the headquarters of the Department were manned by a total of 219 men, 185 of whom were firemen. They were all under the direction of a Fire Marshal and three Assistant Marshals, each of whom had charge of a

[4] *Report of Board of Police*, 1868, pp. 5-7.
[5] *Ibid.*, 1870, p. 8.
[6] *Ibid.*, 1868, p. 7.



Hose Elevator No. 2

division of the city.[7] The ranking officers were: Fire Marshal, Robert A. Williams; First Assistant, John Schank; Second Assistant, Lorenz Walters; Third Assistant, Matthias Benner. Marshal Williams was but forty-three years old. He was active, aggressive and competent.

The Fire Marshal had sole command at all fires over all members of the Fire and Police departments and he could also press other persons into service if occasion warranted. There were also three fire wardens, one for each division of the city, whose duties were those of fire prevention inspectors. They were to enforce regulations concerning faulty chimneys, the elimination of piles of rubbish and combustible materials in streets, alleys, yards and vacant lots and report violations of building regulations.[8]

There were no fireboats in the Department, though both the Board and the Fire Marshal had recommended in 1868 that one with two powerful pumps be built. The estimated cost was $12,000 and it was to be capable of putting a number of streams on river fires or those within 1,500 feet, and doing the work of three land engines at one quarter the cost. In 1870 the Fire Marshal had further recommended that larger water mains be installed throughout the city.[9] The Common Council failed to act on these recommendations.

Each engine company had a two-wheel hose truck carrying a reel of 500 or 600 feet of hose in 20 or 40 foot lengths, the truck drawn by one horse. The steam pressure of the engine varied, in some cases running as high as 240 pounds per square inch. Steam fire engines had come into common use in the larger cities of the country only in the preceding twenty years and then over the opposition of the old volunteer firemen who believed muscles to be more powerful than steam. In tests of steam engines in competition with hand engines the steam engines often came off

[7] *Edwards' Directory of the City of Chicago,* 1870, 1871; *Report of Board of Police,* 1870, 1872.

[8] *Rules and Regulations of the Fire Department of the City of Chicago* (Chicago, 1867).

[9] *Report of Board of Police,* 1868, 1870.

second best, but when it was a matter of endurance the steamer won, as muscles soon tired.[10]

At an official test of the engine of J. B. Rice Company No. 10 in 1865 when the engine was new, it threw a stream of water from a 1¼ inch nozzle to a height of 175 feet, with less than 50 pounds of steam—and this raised in 8¼ minutes after the wood in the firebox was ignited. At this same test, the Rice also threw a horizontal stream to a distance of 230 feet from the same size nozzle.[11]

The steam fire engines of this time were usually rated higher than their capacities under actual working conditions. To get the best out of any steam fire engine, it had to be operated by a good engineer and the boiler had to be well stoked. When this was the case, the engines of the day could deliver their rated amount of water and at times exceeded it. The engines were capable of sustained service but when they were worked beyond their normal capacity for extended periods of time trouble was likely to develop in the boiler and moving parts to such an extent that they were sometimes put out of service. When serious trouble developed, the engines were sent to the department shops, where they were overhauled from time to time.

The "Little Giant," built for the City of Chicago in 1860, was a good example of the first class double engine type with a rotary pump. It was constructed to throw four streams, with a separate outlet and gate for each stream. Its pump was driven by two vertical reciprocating cylinders, having a 7¾ inch diameter and a 9 inch stroke. Its builders claimed that at a fair working speed it could deliver 600 gallons of water per minute, reaching 750 to 900 gallons at full capacity. A 60 gallon water tank and a tender capable of carrying fuel for two hours' consumption were a part of the equipment. The engine weighed 8,640 pounds and was drawn by four horses. It cost $3,500.[12]

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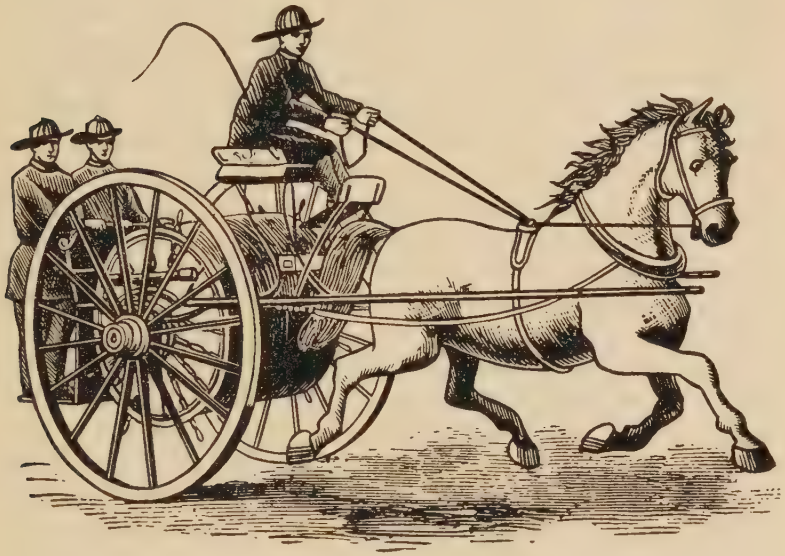
[10] H. A. Musham, Notes on the Chicago Fire (MS in possession of H. A. Musham, Chicago).

[11] Andreas, *History of Chicago*, II: 97.

[12] *Amoskeag Steam Fire Engines, Built by the Amoskeag Manufacturing Co.* (Manchester, N. H., 1866), 22.

While in quarters steam was kept in the boilers of the fire engines by an auxiliary boiler in the basement under the engine. When the company answered an alarm the shavings, waste and wood always ready in the firebox were touched off by a torch lighted from a burning gas jet and the connection with the auxiliary boiler was broken as the engine pulled out of the quarters.

As the streets outside the business district were paved in only a few instances, some of the heavier engines, such as the Little



HOSE TRUCK FOR ENGINE AND HOSE COMPANIES

Giant No. 6, were drawn by a four-horse team. The engines were of the most modern type of the day, and with the exception of the Little Giant and Economy No. 8, were all less than six years old. Four were less than two years old. There were no hand drawn or operated engines in use in the Department in 1871.

The Department had 48,000 feet of hose, mostly rubber of 2½ inch size. Marshal Williams' requisition for 15,000 feet of new hose for 1871 had been cut to 10,000 by the Common Council. There was some leather hose in use but a part of it was unserviceable. It was not used in the winter months as it was apt to freeze and become useless.[13]

Considerable use was made of plug streams, the hose carried by the hose trucks being attached to the fire plugs where the water pressure varied from 23 to 40 pounds per square inch. With a short lead of hose, water could be thrown 103 feet horizontally but as the length of hose was increased the pressure at the nozzle dropped rapidly and shortened the distance considerably. With 300 feet of hose, water could be thrown only about 38 feet.[14] The hose companies were used mainly in the outlying districts.

Each engine company was manned by 1 foreman, 1 engineer, 1 stoker, 3 pipemen, 2 drivers and 1 watchman. A few of the companies had less than 3 pipemen. A hook and ladder company was manned by 1 foreman, 4 truckmen and 1 driver. A hose company was manned by 1 foreman, 2 hosemen and 1 driver. In some hose companies there was only 1 hoseman.[15]

Alarms of fire were given by means of the fire alarm telegraph system, alarm bells in towers, and by still alarms given by watchmen and citizens. The fire alarm telegraph system was first installed in 1865. In 1871 it consisted of 172 numbered alarm boxes and a central office located in the west wing of the Courthouse on the third floor. The boxes were placed on the outside of the company houses and at other locations, in such an arrangement that no point in the city was more than a few blocks distant from one of them. The first boxes were clumsy affairs known as cranks[16] and unless operated very carefully when an alarm was

[13] *Report of Board of Police,* 1870, p. 21.
[14] *National Firemen's Journal,* March 30, 1878, p. 388.
[15] *Report of Board of Police,* 1870.
[16] The following directions were given for operating crank boxes: Upon discovery of, or positive information on, a fire near your signal box, unlock the door and turn the crank slowly and steadily about twenty-five

turned in, were apt to register a box different from that which was pulled and the Department often lost much time answering the call.

On the repeated urgings of the Superintendent of the fire alarm telegraph, E. B. Chandler, Fire Marshal Williams, and the Board of Police, the city finally replaced the old boxes with new model automatic boxes, so simple in operation that in the words of the Superintendent: "One pull at a hook, which a child tall enough to reach a box can give, sets in motion train work, that gives the signal with unerring accuracy."[17] The work of replacing the old boxes with the new model automatic type was finished in the summer of 1871. To perfect the system, it was only necessary to charge the wires connecting the boxes, the central office, and the company engine houses, from housetops to poles.[18]

To keep people from turning in false alarms, each box was kept locked and the key was put into the custody of the occupant of a house nearby. Many of the boxes were placed at stores and the keys given to the storekeepers and to responsible individuals. Some boxes had been installed by the city at important industrial plants and lumber yards, the owners paying the cost.

Supplementing the fire alarm telegraph—in which not all the people had full faith—were the large bell weighing 10,849 pounds at the Courthouse, five smaller bells with electrical striking apparatus and six other bells placed on the outside of company quarters throughout the outlying districts of the city.[19] A watchman was on duty in the cupola of the Courthouse at all hours. On sighting a fire he called the alarm through a voice tube to the operator on duty in the office below and the latter struck the correct box twice on the apparatus. This sent it to all the companies and at the same time rang the Courthouse bell and the smaller bells throughout the city. The bells boomed out the alarm in slow, measured

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times; then wait a few moments, and if you hear no ticking in the box, or alarm on the larger bells, turn as before until you hear the alarm. Cease turning after the bells have struck.

[17] *Report of Board of Police,* 1879, pp. 70-89.

[18] *Ibid.,* 1872.

[19] *Ibid.,* 1870, p. 4.

strokes. Watchmen were also on duty in the towers of the companies from 9:30 P. M. to 6:30 A. M. Sighting what appeared to be a fire, a watchman called the alarm—known as a "still"—to the man on watch at the desk below. If it turned out to be a fire he assisted in waking the company and turned in the alarm on the box outside of the quarters.

The third way of giving an alarm was by going to the company house nearby and telling the watchman, who turned out the company. This also was called a still alarm. As far as giving the alarms is concerned the city appeared to be well protected.

The Department had a system of three calls. The first could be turned in on any box and it brought out sufficient apparatus to handle ordinary fires. When additional help was needed a Marshal pulled the box again, giving a second alarm. If still more was required he pulled the box a third time. This was the third or general alarm and brought out the entire Department.

The Department was on a paid status, the men being on duty twenty-four hours a day, with time off for meals and an occasional day off. With few exceptions the officers and the men were husky, strapping, bearded or mustachioed young buckos capable of licking their weights in bobcats. Several were veterans of the late war. With few exceptions, they were all well experienced in fire fighting. They were appointed by the Board of Police, favor and political influence at times playing a part in their choice.

The fire company was a neighborhood institution and each company had its ardent partisans who stoutly maintained its superiority over all comers. There was further rivalry between the companies themselves, each striving to outdo the others.

Records show an average of about two fires a day during the year preceding the Great Fire. This was more than in New York City, with three times the population. The Department cannot be said to have been overworked, but considering the faulty and inflammable construction of the city, its work, intermittent as it was, was at times exhausting and dangerous.

Comparing the Department as it was in 1871 with fire

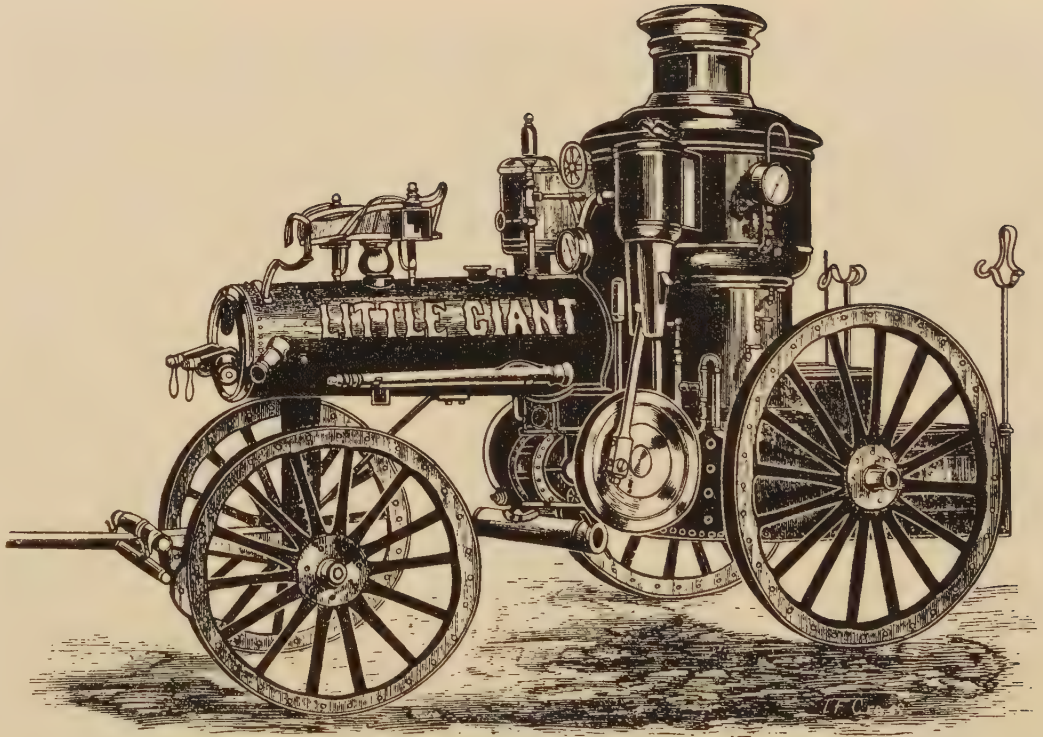
departments of other cities, it appears to have been in the very front rank. It was first organized in 1858 and its development from a volunteer force, with its rivalries and factions, to a well organized fire fighting force using steam engines had been well carried out. It was not entirely free from political influence, and the factionalism of volunteer days had not been entirely eliminated, but considering that it had been in existence but thirteen years it was an efficient, hard-working, fire fighting organization.

THE DROUGHT

During the years 1870-1871 there was abnormal sunspot activity. As the summer of 1871 progressed, very little rain fell and a drought became general throughout the great central valley. There was little or no water in the streams or wells and over wide areas springs ceased to run. Water became scarce even for family use. Reports came in of prairie fires throughout the West and of severe forest fires in Michigan and Wisconsin. Smoke filled the air, thickening it to a heavy haze. On the lakes navigation at times was a hazardous matter. The prevailing winds, generally from the southwest, brought to the lake country the scorching heat of the great plains.

At Chicago the summer was hot and exceedingly dry. From July 3, when 1 50/100 inches of rain fell, to October 9, there was only 1 40/100 inches, distributed as follows: August 3, 29/100 inches; August 28, 54/100 inches; August 30, 1/100 inches; September 14, 36/100 inches; September 15, 5/100 inches; September 28, 11/100 inches.[20] These rains, with the exception of those of August 28 and September 14, were nothing but sprinklings which evaporated as fast as they fell. The result was that the city, its business blocks, factories, mills, docks, homes, pavements, sidewalks, as well as the large amounts of wood piled up in lumber yards and wood working plants, thoroughly dried out as did the numerous trees scattered throughout the city. The trees had

[20] Andreas, *History of Chicago,* II: 703.



FIRST CLASS DOUBLE ENGINE, WITH ONE ROTARY PUMP.

"Little Giant" Engine Company No. 6

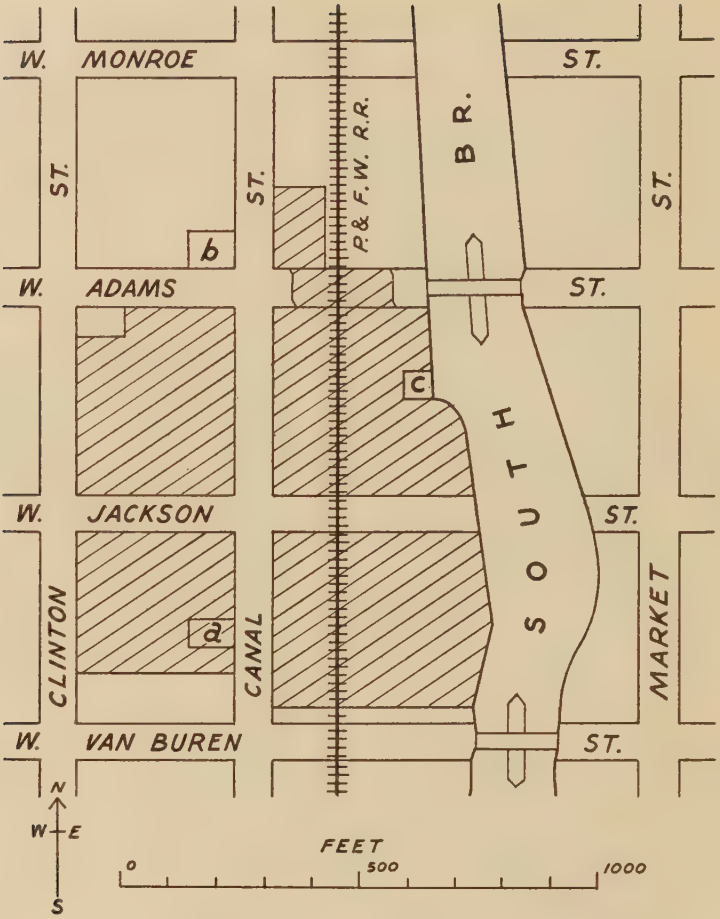
already shed a good part of their leaves which lay scattered over the parched grass or heaped in piles ready for burning or removal. At the beginning of October, Chicago was a thoroughly dry tinderbox. The people knew it and were fearful of the danger that fire could bring to the city.

THE SATURDAY NIGHT FIRE, OCTOBER 7-8, 1871

The first week of October was one of serious fires. On Saturday, September 30, at about 2:00 P.M., a fire broke out in the large Burlington warehouse on 16th Street near State, which burned with an estimated loss of $638,000. The next day four fires occurred, one of which destroyed a new brick double residence at 1437-1439 Prairie Avenue. On Monday five fires destroyed property with an estimated loss of over $57,000. During the remainder of the week there were fifteen fires, some of which were attributed to incendiarism, and the week was not to close without a tremendous fire which struck consternation to the hearts of all who saw it.[21]

Between 10:00 and 11:00 P.M. on Saturday, October 7, a fire was discovered in the boiler room of Lull and Holmes's planing mill at 209 Canal Street. The mill, a two story brick building 60 by 100 feet in size, stood on the west side of the street between Jackson and Van Buren in a neighborhood known to insurance men as the "Red Flash." An alarm was turned in on Box 248 but before the firemen could reach the scene the mill was almost consumed. In the block were a vinegar works, a lumber yard, dwelling houses, sheds, outhouses and a saloon, practically all of frame construction. A fourteen mile breeze was blowing from the south and in an incredibly short time the buildings in the north three quarters of the block were aflame. The wind shifted to the southwest, blowing strongly. Within twenty minutes the blocks to the north and northeast were ablaze. The

[21] Andreas, *History of Chicago,* II: 704.



THE SATURDAY NIGHT FIRE
October 7-8, 1871

Burned area shown shaded

a. Where fire started.

b. Daniel Quirk's saloon.

c. National elevator.

THE SATURDAY NIGHT FIRE

one across the street from the mill was occupied by a wagon works, two frame tenements and a lumber yard containing 3,000,000 feet of lumber. In the southeastern quarter of the block were piled an additional 4,000,000 feet. Also between Canal Street and the river were extensive coal and wood yards, as well as the tracks of the Pittsburgh, Fort Wayne and Chicago Railroad. Fronting on the river, midway between Jackson and Adams streets, was the large National Elevator. On Clinton Street in the direct line of the fire were a half dozen frame houses and a sash and door factory with a large supply of materials in its yards. Through all of this mass of combustibles the fire ran like a flood. Marshal Williams, needing help, pressed citizens into service and put them to work battling the flames between Canal Street and the river. The fire threatened to cross Adams Street west of Canal. On the southeast corner of that block was the saloon of Daniel W. Quirk. Convinced that his place would be destroyed, Quirk threw it open to the crowd and hundreds availed themselves of the opportunity to wet their whistles and to smoke on the house. While Quirk was trying to save his personal belongings a few of the more grateful returned with fire extinguishers and turning them on the walls saved the building.[22]

Adams Street crossed the railroad tracks on an iron viaduct. The flames swept over and under it and set off the freight sheds on the north side of the street. It appeared to be almost certain that the passenger cars and the depot immediately to the north would be destroyed and with them would most likely go the entire city. The situation was very critical. The Department here made its stand. Let an eyewitness describe the battle that ensued:

> A dozen leads of hose—all that could be worked to advantage were brought into the street, and so many streams were directed upon the burning buildings, the rear portions of which were blazing furiously. Inch by inch those firemen fought for an advantage, fighting in a perfect hell of heat and

[22] Robert S. Critchell, *Recollections of a Fire Insurance Man* ([Chicago], 1909), 81-82; Andreas, *History of Chicago,* II: 706.

> smoke. Their courage and endurance were something magnificent. While the spectators hundreds of feet away, cowered before the terrible heat and blinding drift of glowing cinders, the firemen stood their ground, often for five minutes at a stretch, within a dozen feet of the fire, now and then withdrawing a few feet to get breath, only to return to the charge as manfully as before. They could not hope to extinguish, but they did succeed in subduing the flames so as to save the opposite buildings and prevent any further spread of the conflagration. This was the grand pitched battle of the occasion—the masterpiece of the Department—and it deserves to be signalized as one of the most remarkable achievements on record.[23]

The fire was finally extinguished at 3:00 P.M., Sunday afternoon, and most of the companies returned to their quarters. A few, however, including the Little Giant No. 6, remained to wet down the ruins. The Department lost in the flames the truck of Pioneer Hook and Ladder No. 1. The William James Engine No. 3 was seriously damaged and taken to the shops for repairs. Chicago Engine No. 5 suffered slight damage. To move it away from the fire it was necessary to break the suction connection with the fire plug with an axe. There were but fifteen engines ready for duty after this fire as Liberty No. 7 was also in the shops.[24]

The fire had burned over an area of four blocks, about sixteen acres, causing an estimated loss of $750,000. A row of frame dwellings on the south side of Van Buren Street between Clinton and Canal streets, as well as the southeast corner of Clinton and Adams were not touched. Most curious of all was the escape from destruction of the large National Elevator on the river, directly in the path of the flames which for a time threatened it on three sides. All that remained in the burned area were the large piles of coal which were still burning with a bluish flame and emitting clouds of smoke.[25]

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[23] *Chicago Tribune,* Oct. 8, 1871.
[24] *Ibid.,* Oct. 9, 1893; *Report of Board of Police,* 1872, p. 17.
[25] Andreas, *History of Chicago,* II: 706, 707.

On this fire the *Chicago Tribune* remarked:

> It was one of the most disastrous which had ever visited a city which had already enrolled in her annals numbers of such visitations, many of them so terrible that they could serve as eras in her history. For days past alarm has followed alarm, but the comparatively trifling losses have familiarized us to the pealing of the Court House bell, and we had forgotten that the absence of rain for three weeks had left everything in so dry and inflammable a condition that a spark might start a fire which would sweep from end to end of the city.[26]

The firemen were exhausted after this seventeen-hour battle with one of the worst fires in the history of the city. Their clothes were burned, their faces scorched and their eyelids seared and swollen. Some could hardly see. Many were incapacitated for active duty and sent home to recuperate. There could not have been more than 125 fit men on duty on the evening of October 8, and most of them were badly in need of rest. The engines, hose and equipment had been severely used and were in need of close attention to put them in first-class working condition. The Little Giant No. 6 returned to its quarters on Maxwell Street near Canal at about 8:30 P.M. after having worked continuously for twenty-two hours. Some of its crew of nine were plainly exhausted and were sent home. The rest of the company, except the man on watch, turned in for the night.[27]

This fire was frightening, following the large fire of the preceding Saturday. Two great fires within eight days of each other, a third was sure to follow. It was felt that these fires were but the forerunners of a greater disaster for which the people carelessly and nature deliberately and relentlessly had made the preparations. The city was nothing but one extensive mass of inflammable material which had been seasoned for burning by the long drought of the preceding months. The only agency that could prevent it was the Fire Department, weak in equipment and

[26] *Chicago Tribune,* Oct. 8, 1871.
[27] Andreas, *History of Chicago,* II: 711-13.

its men in an exhausted condition from their arduous struggle of the preceding twenty-four hours. The setting was right. Only a fateful train of circumstances was needed to bring about the destruction of the city by fire.

THE O'LEARY PREMISES

About one half of the people of the city lived on the West Side, where more than in other sections the dwellings were intermingled with mills and factories. This was particularly so in the neighborhood just west of the South Branch. Here the people lived in one or two story frame houses usually built on lots only about twenty feet in width but of considerable depth. On some of these lots were two or three houses from front to rear and usually at the alley ends were barns, sheds and shacks. Some of the houses—generally of the cottage type—were built directly on the ground, some a few feet above it on cedar posts and some had basements. High wooden fences separated the lots.

The people here relied largely on the shavings or waste of the numerous wood working mills for fuel for cooking and heating. As winter was not far away the sheds, basements, yards and the open spaces under the houses were piled high with this material. In this neighborhood the streets were nearly all narrow and unpaved except such as Canal and Twelfth. The blocks were in general smaller than elsewhere in the city and in each were one or more alleys. The sidewalks were of wood and in many places built on posts. The people living here were in the main of Irish, Bohemian or Scandinavian birth or extraction and were a sturdy independent lot.

On the north side of De Koven Street at No. 137, two short blocks north of Twelfth Street and four and a half west of the river, were the premises of Mr. and Mrs. Patrick O'Leary consisting of two small frame cottages, each about 36 feet long by 16 wide, one of which fronted on the street, the other being but a few feet to the rear. At the rear end of the lot, which was 25

feet wide by 100 deep, was a story and a half barn, 20 by 16 feet in size, about 16 feet high and with a peaked roof. It was built of one inch planks and two-by-fours, the planking being set on end. Along the east side of the lot and passing the barn was a passageway to the alley which was 15 feet wide. Patrick O'Leary, a laborer, and his wife had owned the property since 1864 and had been living in it for five years. With their five young children they lived in the rear cottage and rented the front one to Mr. and Mrs. Patrick McLaughlin.

The neighboring houses were of similar character though some had two stories. The alley which ran east and west was lined with barns and sheds in one of which, 25 feet east of the O'Leary barn, was a small paint shop.

In the barn Mrs. O'Leary kept five cows, a calf, a horse and a small wagon. She had a small dairy business, selling milk in the neighborhood. A load of two tons of fresh timothy hay had been delivered to the O'Learys and placed in the attic of the barn on the afternoon of Sunday, October 8.[28]

THE EVENING OF SUNDAY, OCTOBER 8, 1871

The weather in Chicago for the first few days of Indian Summer had been warmer than usual. The wind had been generally from the southwest, the skies clear and daily temperatures reached figures in the seventies. The haze of early fall was unusually thick. The report of the United States Weather Bureau Office, issued at 7:35 A.M. on Sunday, October 8, predicted for the area around Lake Michigan: "The barometer will probably fall, with increasing southerly winds, and rising temperatures, followed by cloudy or threatening weather during the night." The day dawned clear and bright, the early morning was chilly, with a temperature reading of 51 degrees at 7:00 A.M. A gentle breeze was blowing from the southwest at 19 miles an hour. The relative

[28] Musham, Notes on the Chicago Fire; Andreas, *History of Chicago*, II: 708.

humidity was 62 per cent. As the day wore on it rapidly became warmer and the velocity of the wind increased. At 2:00 P. M. unofficial observations placed the temperature at 85 degrees and the wind was still blowing from the southwest at 35 miles, a high breeze. At 4:00 P.M. the official temperature was 79 degrees, a 22 mile wind was blowing and it was still clear and bright. The sun set at 5:30 P.M., leaving in its wake a flaming red sky, and the wind died down to a gentle breeze that just barely rustled the dried leaves of the trees as darkness settled over the city.[29]

At about 7:30 P.M. an alarm was turned in on Box 28 at Clark and 12th streets. The fire proved to be slight and the companies returned to their quarters. At 9:00 P.M. the same gentle breeze was blowing from the southwest.[30] In those days a large part of the people went to Sunday evening church services, the others either went calling or remained at home. The majority retired early. Few people were on the streets as the peaceful quiet of Sunday evening settled over the city.

PART II. THE FIRE

THE START OF THE FIRE

Sometime between 8:30 and 8:45 P.M. Mrs. O'Leary went out to her barn with a kerosene table lamp in her hand, possibly to milk a cow or to attend one that was ailing. She placed the lamp on the floor. The cow became frisky and kicked it over with her right hind foot, breaking the bowl. The oil ran over the floor and the burning wick set it on fire. In an instant the interior was a mass of flame and smoke. Mrs. O'Leary gave a

[29] H. A. Musham, Notes on the Weather at the Time of the Chicago Fire, and *ibid.*, Notes on the Chicago Fire.

[30] James W. Sheahan and George P. Upton, *The Great Conflagration* (Chicago, 1871), 160; Musham, Notes on the Chicago Fire; Andreas, *History of Chicago,* II: 715.

loud scream which was heard by the neighbors but they paid no attention to it. Patrick O'Leary ran out of the house to see what had happened. Probably the O'Learys tried to save the terror-stricken animals but this was impossible because the fire was between the animals and the large doors opening on the alley.

The fire was now visible throughout the neighborhood. At about 8:55 P.M. the infant son of William Lee, who lived two doors east of the O'Learys, cried out, and when the father went into the bedroom, on the west side of the house, he saw the fire. Calling to his wife to look after the baby he ran over to Bruno Goll's drugstore on the northwest corner of Twelfth and Canal streets to turn in an alarm.[31]

Other neighbors now ran to the O'Leary place to see what was burning and to offer assistance. They also were unable to put out the fire or to save any of the terrorized animals but the calf. This was saved by "Peg Leg" Sullivan, who lived on the other side of De Koven Street and near the O'Learys, but at the cost of his wooden leg. As he was dragging the calf out of the barn by the halter the peg of his leg plunged through the floor, throwing him down. With rare presence of mind he unfastened the straps, left the leg in the barn and hobbled out with his arms around the calf's neck. After leaving the calf on a vacant lot across the street, he went home. The fire spread to the home of James Dalton next door to the east, while Dalton was trying to save the O'Leary barn.[32]

THE ALARM FOR THE FIRE

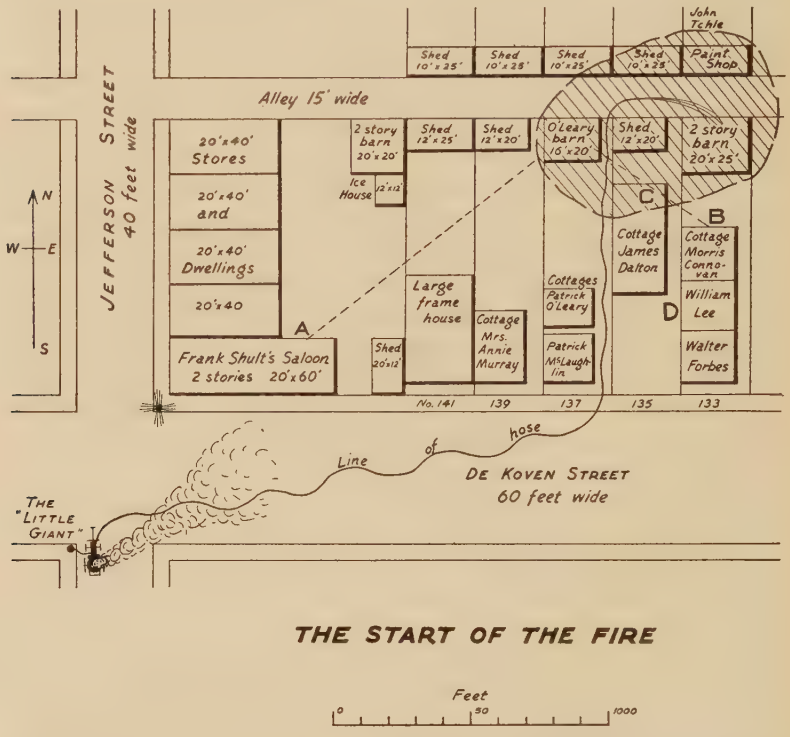
At about 9:05 P.M. William Lee, very much excited, ran into Goll's store and urgently told him to turn in an alarm on Box 296 which was on the 12th Street side of the building, saying the fire was near the O'Leary place. Goll took his key, opened the box

[31] Andreas, *History of Chicago,* II: 708-709, 714-15.

[32] *The Lakeside Memorial of the Burning of Chicago* (University Pub. Co., Chicago, 1872), 22; Andreas, *History of Chicago,* II: 709, 713-15; *Chicago Evening Journal,* Oct. 10, 21, 1871; *Chicago Times,* Oct. 18, 1871.

and pulled down the lever. This alarm failed to register at the central office in the Courthouse.[83]

A few minutes later the fire burst through the roof of the O'Leary barn as if impelled by an explosion and sent up a billow of flame, carrying burning planks, shingles and masses of burning hay which it whirled aloft and scattered over the neighborhood.



THE START OF THE FIRE

8:30-8:45—O'Leary barn caught fire. 8:45—Fire was seen from window (A) over Shult's saloon. 8:55—Reflection of fire on wall of Connovan cottage (B) was seen from Dalton cottage (C). Fire was also seen from William Lee home (D) about same time.

[83] Andreas, *History of Chicago,* II: 711, 716.

It was now sighted by Watchman Joseph Lauf who had just gone to his post in the tower of the Little Giant Company No. 6, on Maxwell Street, six blocks directly south of the O'Leary premises. Lauf called the alarm down to Foreman William H. Musham who was on watch at the desk. Musham turned out the company, hitched up the horses which were champing at their bits and stamping on the floor. As the heavy engine moved, breaking connection with the heater, the steam let go with a roar and the engineer thrust his torch into the firebox and touched off the fire. As the big doors opened and the shorthanded company rolled out into the darkness, the bell of the fire alarm telegraph was striking: ——— ————— ——, ——— ————— ——, ("Box 342, Canalport Avenue and Halsted Street")—one mile south of the actual fire on De Koven Street.[34] Musham paid no attention to the alarm but started directly for the fire. The engine turned north at Jefferson Street, almost careening as it made the corner, fire and smoke pouring from the stack. The people roused from the drowse of Sunday evening turned out as the company passed by, the women standing at the doors and gates and the men and boys running after the engine, shouting and yelling as they went.

Just before this, William J. Brown, night operator on duty in the central fire alarm telegraph office on the third floor of the west wing of the Courthouse, noticed a light in the southwest. He called it to the attention of his sister who was in the office and they at first thought that it was a flare-up of burning coal piles left by the big fire of the previous night. About the same time the light was seen by Watchman Matthias Schaffer in the tower of the building. Deciding that it was a fire, he located it through his spyglass as being near Canalport Avenue and Halsted Street and called down to Brown to strike Box 342. At 9:21 P.M. the bells in the engine house were sounding the alarm while the Court-

[34] Andreas, *History of Chicago,* II: 711; Rufus Blanchard, *Discovery and Conquests of the Northwest* (Wheaton, Ill., 1881), 684; *Chicago Evening Journal,* Nov. 24, 1871; *Chicago Tribune,* Nov. 25, 1871; Musham, Notes on the Chicago Fire.

house bell and the other bells boomed out 3-4-2, 3-4-2, over the quiet city.[35]

About 9:22 P.M. another neighbor of the O'Learys ran into Goll's store, out of breath and very much excited. He was barefooted and dressed only in his pants and a red flannel shirt. He cried out: " 'The fire is spreading very rapidly' and demanded that they turn in an alarm. His long run from the fire had left him panting and set his bushy shock of thick black hair on end. They thought from his wild appearance and excitement that he was a lunatic and paid him scant attention." He persisted. Goll told him that an alarm was not necessary as the engine had just gone down the street, but going to the door he noticed that the fire had assumed considerable magnitude. He now became alarmed and pulled Box 296 a second time. This alarm also failed to register at the central office. On receiving the call for Box 342, engine companies Chicago No. 5, Waubansia No. 2, Illinois No. 15, and hose companies America No. 2, Tempest No. 1, Protection Hook and Ladder Company No. 2, and Hook and Ladder No. 4, pulled out of their quarters for the fire.[36]

The Little Giant arrived at the fire at 9:24 P.M. and took water from the plug on the southwest corner of Jefferson and De Koven streets. Foreman Musham, finding five or six houses and sheds in the alley on fire, quickly laid a line of hose down De Koven Street and along the passage on the east side of the O'Leary lot and put a stream of water on the fire. The fire at this time was not large but it was a nasty one. A few minutes after Box 342 was sounded, Third Assistant Fire Marshal Matthias Benner arrived and took charge.

Watchman Schaffer, all this time watching the brightening light from the Courthouse tower, now was convinced that Box

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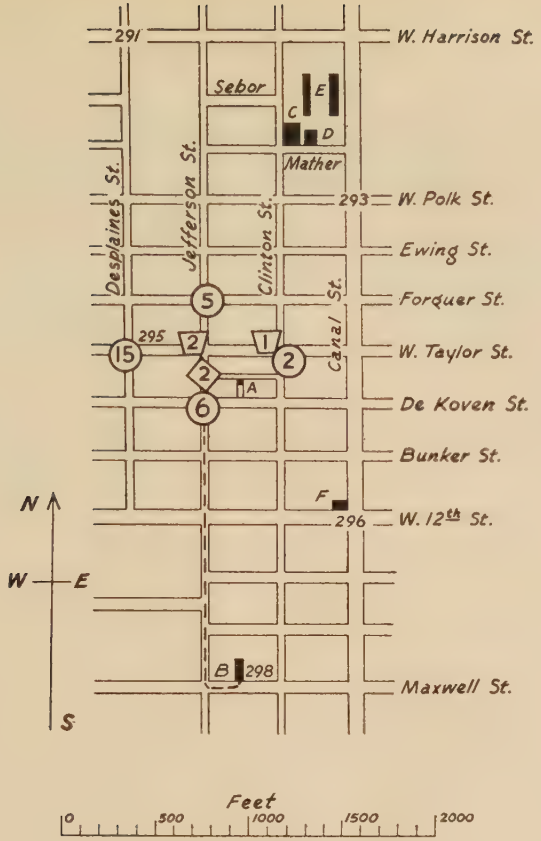
[35] Andreas, *History of Chicago,* II: 711.

[36] Musham, Notes on the Chicago Fire; Andreas, *History of Chicago,* II: 709-16; Official Investigation of the Chicago Fire by the Board of Police in the Fire Department, Nov. 23-Dec. 4, 1871, as reported in the Chicago newspapers, Nov. 24-Dec. 5, 1871 (original MS has not been located).



HOW THE COMPANIES ANSWERED THE ALARM FOR THE O'LEARY FIRE

○ *Engine Companies*

▽ *Hose Companies*

◇ *Hook and Ladder Companies*

291, 293, 295, 296, 298 . . . . Fire Alarm Boxes

A—The O'Leary barn. B—Quarters of "Little Giant" Engine Company No. 6. C—St. Paul's Church. D—Roelle furniture finishing factory. E—Bateham's mills. F—Goll's drugstore.

342 was the wrong location. He called Brown and asked him to strike 319 at the Police Station at Johnson and 12th streets, two blocks south and five and a half west of the fire. Brown refused, saying that it would confuse the companies and that they would pass the fire on their way to 342. At 9:31, Brown on his own responsibility struck the second alarm for 342. A few seconds afterwards, Boxes 293, 295 and 296 were pulled and registered, but he paid no attention to them, thinking that they were all for the same fire.

America Hose Company No. 2, on leaving its quarters, went directly to the fire. It took the plug at Clinton and Taylor streets, and laying out a line of hose put a plug stream on the fire. The Little Giant at this time was working fine, the pressure at the pipe being so strong as to require the foreman to help the single pipeman of the company in handling it. Tempest Hose No. 1 arrived at the fire at about 9:32 P.M. and, also taking water at Clinton and Taylor, put a stream on the fire.[37]

On receiving the call for Box 342, Chicago Engine Company No. 5, Chris Schimmels, foreman, promptly left its quarters on Jefferson Street, just north of Van Buren, about eight blocks north of the fire. At the door, noticing a bright light in the northeast sky, Schimmels became confused and drove to Clinton and Jackson streets. Engineer Henry V. Coleman cried out to the driver of the engine that they were going in the wrong direction. They turned around and went south to Van Buren, west to Halsted, south to Forquer and finally east to the corner of that street and Jefferson, one block northwest of the fire, arriving there at 9:36 P.M. Taking the plug on the northwest corner, a line of hose was laid to the Taylor Street front of the fire. When water was sent through the hose it burst. The men tried to repair it by wrapping blankets around the breaks and weighting them down with planks. This did not work and nothing could be done until

[37] Andreas, *History of Chicago,* II: 711; Blanchard, *Discovery of the Northwest,* 684; *Chicago Evening Journal,* Nov. 24, 1871; *Chicago Tribune,* Nov. 24, 1871, Oct. 9, 1893.

another supply of hose was received. At this time a spring broke in the pump and the engine became completely disabled. Schimmels ran to the engine and stopped the stoker from drawing the fire.

At this time the Little Giant was playing a heavy stream on the fire in the alley and for a time prevented it from spreading to neighboring barns and houses. It was very hot there and in spite of the desperate efforts of the Giant's men, the houses on De Koven Street in rear of them caught fire and they were for a time practically surrounded by the flames.[38] The fire was not yet beyond the power of the company to subdue had the other companies on the ground been able to help it.

THE FIRE SPREADS

The fire quickly spread to other barns and sheds on both sides of the alley, burning fiercely. Its heat created a strong draft[39] which blew in from all directions and sparks were blown into many more yards, setting fire to shavings and wood piles. The blazing shavings, sparks and shingles from frame structures were sucked up by the draft and whirled aloft, in turn setting fire to more sheds and to the backs of the houses on Taylor Street.

In the meantime on the arrival of Marshal Benner, Foreman Musham of the Little Giant had a chance to look around at the fire. Noting that it had crossed the alley and that the houses on Taylor Street were burning, he pressed some citizens into service and with their aid laid a second line of hose down the alley between Taylor and De Koven streets and put a stream of water on those houses. A row of flat roofed, two-story buildings occupied by groceries and saloons, and fronting on Jefferson Street, also took fire. Marshal Benner ordered Musham to work on them.

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[38] Andreas, *History of Chicago,* II: 711-12; *Chicago Tribune,* Nov. 25 and 26, 1871.

[39] The term "draft" will be used hereafter to distinguish the artificial movements of the air created by the fire from the natural wind blowing from the southwest.

The citizens soon abandoned their hose and it burned in the alley. In this way a good chance to stop the fire in the O'Leary block was lost.

Waubansia No. 2 arrived at the fire shortly after No. 5, and took the plug at the corner of Clinton and Taylor streets, directly in front of the fire. It had gone to Box 342, and on the two-mile run it is likely that the steam pressure had fallen, possibly from lack of fuel, because it did little or nothing for some time after reaching the fire. Marshal Williams now arrived in response to the second alarm. Noting the threatening aspect the fire had taken, he immediately sent Private Dorsey, of America Hose No. 2, to turn in a third alarm.[40]

Illinois Engine Company No. 15, William Mullin, foreman, also went to Box 342 at Canalport and Halsted but found no fire there. They then proceeded to the fire and took the plug at the corner of Taylor and Desplaines streets, a block and a half from the fire and went to work about 9:40 P.M. At 9:45 P.M. the hose truck of William James Engine Company No. 3, the engine of which was in the shops, arrived at the corner of Forquer and Jefferson streets. Chicago No. 5 was still disabled. Steam was down, and the men were tearing up planks from the sidewalk for fuel so that they could get up steam quickly. The fire was still on the south side of Taylor Street but the houses on the north side of the street were showing the effects of the heat. A line of hose was laid and a stream put on the fire. As the broken and useless hose of Chicago No. 5 had burned where it was lying on the street in front of the fire, Engineer Charles Petrie, of William James No. 3, supplied a section of hose to No. 5. About 9:55 P.M. when Chicago No. 5 was again ready for work, it was discovered that the coal supply of the engine was exhausted. The nearest supply was at the engine house eight blocks to the north.[41]

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[40] *Report of Board of Police,* 1872, p. 12; *Chicago Tribune,* Dec. 3, 1871, Oct. 9, 1893; Musham, Notes on the Chicago Fire; Andreas, *History of Chicago,* II: 712.

[41] *Chicago Tribune,* Nov. 25, 1871; Andreas, *History of Chicago,* II: 713.

The houses on the north side of Taylor Street, which was sixty feet wide, now took fire. These houses were of the same general character as those in the O'Leary block. At this time the fire did not appear to be beyond the firemen's power to subdue as it was confined to the two blocks, with a strong hold on only one. No one felt alarmed, though the light was so bright that a person could read the city clock one and a quarter miles distant. The wind was carrying sparks to the northeast right through the center of the city, its course lying only two blocks west of the City Hall.[42] The roofs of buildings in advance of the fire were covered with men and boys throwing buckets of water on the showers of sparks as they fell, while in the streets men, women and children were loading furniture, boxes, trunks and clothing on wagons, or dragging them along the streets to supposedly safe places.

ST. PAUL'S CHURCH TAKES FIRE

About 10:00 P.M. a mass of burning material about two feet long and one foot thick arose from the fire north of Taylor Street and went whirling through the air off to the north until it struck the steeple of St. Paul's Catholic Church on the northeast corner of Mather (now W. Lexington) and Clinton streets four blocks away. The church was a high frame structure, one hundred by forty feet in size, with a school on the first floor. It was almost instantaneously enveloped in flames.

Watchman Schaffer sighted this fire at about the same hour from his post in the Courthouse tower. He told Brown to strike Box 387, Van Buren and Canal streets, three blocks north and one block east of its actual location. He had missed again. Box 293, the correct one for this fire, at Canal and Polk streets, was but one block south and one east of it. Marshal Williams, who believed that he had the original fire under control, was startled

[42] *Report of Board of Police,* 1872, p. 13. [Theodore Mosher, Jr.], "Journal Entries Relative to the Chicago Fire," in Henry J. Cox and John H. Armington, *The Weather and Climate of Chicago,* Geographic Society of Chicago, *Bulletin No. 4* (Chicago, ©1914), Appendix III.

when informed that the church was burning. The second alarm companies had not as yet reached the fire but as they came in he detailed three to handle the new fire.[43]

The church was located in the block bounded by Mather, Clinton, Harrison and Canal streets which was 335 feet long from east to west and 500 from north to south. In it besides the church and its parish house were two large three-story and attic frame shingle mills and yards belonging to W. B. Bateham. One mill was 240 feet long and 60 feet wide and fronted on Canal Street, while the other, 80 feet west of it, measured 240 by 40 feet. The southwest corner of the second mill almost touched the church. Eleven feet south of the mills and just east of the church was a three-story frame building, 50 by 70 feet in size, fronting on Mather Street and occupied by the Roelle Furniture Finishing Company. It was filled with combustibles. In the yards about the mills were 1,000 cords of kindling wood in piles 25 feet high, as well as about 600,000 feet of furniture lumber belonging to the Frank Mayer Furniture Company which occupied the attic of the east Bateham building. On the northwest corner of the block was the old J. D. Caton residence, a house of the large country farm-house style, which stood well back on a lot filled with large trees.

Mr. Bateham, a member of the Common Council, had been an early fire marshal and at all times was a close observer of the larger fires in the city. He first noticed the fire from his residence at Harrison and Silver streets at 8:45 P.M. He saw large pieces of burning material flying in a northeasterly direction from 300 to 500 feet in the air. Fearing for his mills, he started for his property at about 9:00. He reached the mills at 9:30 and found the watchman at work with a chemical engine. They started the mill engine and pump, and laying hose from a fire plug in front of the mill, flooded everything in the yard. There was a large unburned area between the original fire and the mills. Shortly after 10:00 P.M. the burning church had gone down in ruins, although there

[43] *Chicago Evening Journal,* Nov. 24, 1871; Andreas, *History of Chicago,* II: 713, 715; Sheahan and Upton, *Great Conflagration,* 163.

were three steamers working on it—the Fred Gund No. 14, A. C. Coventry No. 11 and the Jacob Rehm No. 4.

In the meantime the Roelle factory caught fire from the church and soon went up in smoke and flame. From it the fire passed into the Mayer Furniture Company in the attic of the east Bateham mill. It spread throughout the mill and the rest of the block with remarkable rapidity. By 10:30 the firemen, driven away by the intense heat, had to abandon hopes of saving the Bateham mills. The burning of the mills was a scene of magnificent grandeur, the crackling flames roaring and leaping hundreds of feet into the air. As Mr. Bateham turned from his property he remarked, "The materials from this mill will fire the South Side, and nothing can prevent it now."[44]

At 10:40 P.M. Operator Brown sent a third alarm for Box 342 over the wires, though he must have known that that box was not the correct one for the fire. There were now two distinct and separate fires, each one burning furiously and each one more than a task for the entire department. To keep the story clear the original fire will hereafter be referred to as the "O'Leary Fire," and that of Bateham's mills as the "Bateham Fire." This method of designating separate fires will be adhered to throughout the rest of the story.

THE O'LEARY FIRE MOVES NORTH

To return to the original, or O'Leary Fire: after it had crossed Taylor Street, it advanced steadily, cutting a swath eighty or a hundred feet wide, and moving on a course about ten degrees east of north. From this burning trail, it spread to the east and west. Advancing two blocks, it halted for a time, and turning back because of a shift of the wind, burned the east side of Jefferson Street, skipping houses here and there. It did not cross that street. The house on the northwest corner of De Koven and Clinton in the O'Leary block did not burn. The fire now resumed

[44] *Chicago Evening Journal,* Nov. 24, 1871.

its northward march aided in its advance by drafts blowing under sidewalks and buildings, curling around them and rushing up alleys. The people living in this neighborhood, mostly Scandinavians and Germans, were singularly cheerful in the face of the danger and destruction which threatened them. They filled the streets with their household goods through which the fire ran like a stream. The fire crossed Clinton Street between Ewing and Forquer.

Frank Sherman Engine No. 9 stood its ground at the corner of Polk and Clinton. George Leady[45] the stoker, had to place a door to shield him from the blistering heat. The heat scorched the hair off the panicky horses and almost burned off the whiskers of the engineer and his stoker. To save the engine, it was necessary to move it on the run. About this time a barn between Harrison and Sebor streets, some two blocks ahead of the fire, ignited and burned fiercely and it was but a few minutes until other barns in the vicinity were on fire. The fire was now advancing in two solid columns, one between Clinton and Jefferson streets, and the other between Clinton and Canal, with the latter in advance.[46] They soon united with the fire spreading from Bateham's mills. This common fire, covering an area of about thirty acres, will henceforth be referred to as the "O'Leary-Bateham Fire."

The firemen were hindered all the time by one of the largest crowds that ever attended a fire. Beer and whiskey flowed like water. When the throng became troublesome, Foreman Swenie of Fred Gund Engine Company No. 14 ordered his men to turn the stream into the crowd. A dozen people were knocked down by the force of the water, but those bowled over got up laughing and asked Swenie to turn the hose on the rest of the crowd.[47]

The spread of the fire was now so rapid that the engines in front of it were compelled to make quick changes of position to

[45] Leady, the last of the firemen who fought the fire, passed away on Feb. 26, 1939, aged ninety-four.

[46] Sheahan and Upton, *Great Conflagration,* 65, 72-73; Andreas, *History of Chicago,* 714, 718; Cox and Armington, *Weather and Climate,* App. III.

[47] *Chicago Tribune,* Oct. 9, 1893.

avoid being destroyed. Fred Gund Engine No. 14 had to move from its initial position on Canal Street in front of Bateham's mill, just south of Harrison, where it had made another stand for a half-hour. It then made a short stand at Harrison and Canal, from which position it was also driven by the fire, finally moving to a location on Van Buren Street near the bridge.

The fire was now a wonderful spectacle. Flames soared high into the air, driving tremendous billows of smoke high above them, where they formed ominous clouds which moved slowly off to the northeast. The sky was filled with showers of sparks, burning boards and shingles. Pieces of tar roofing paper were carried over the city and out over the lake. The crib three-quarters of a mile off shore at the foot of Oak Street, about two miles from the fire, with water all around it was threatened with destruction, and the keeper and his wife worked desperately until 3:00 A.M. putting out the sparks that fell on the roof.[48]

THE FIRE STRIKES THE SOUTH SIDE

The fire reached Van Buren Street at 11:30 P.M. Before it was the burned-over area of the fire of Saturday night. Everyone hoped that here its progress would be stayed, but all such hopes were rudely dashed to the ground. At that hour a red glare sprang up from the South Side. A large mass of fire had been carried across the South Branch and had fallen on a building at the southeast corner of Jackson and Franklin streets. The fire had lodged itself in the very heart of that part of the city.

This building, a three-story brick structure, was the new stable of the Parmelee Omnibus and Stage Company. It had just been completed and was to be occupied on October 11. The owners had posted a force of employees on the roof to put out the sparks and brands as they fell, but the shower of fire struck the building with such terrific force that the men were forced to flee for their lives. In a few minutes the building was engulfed in

[48] *Chicago Tribune*, Nov. 29, 1871.

flames.[49] A new center of fire had been created from which the flames spread in all directions. It was about 1,200 feet from the Bateham-O'Leary Fire on the West Side. It will be referred to as the "Parmelee Fire."

Just before midnight Sergeant Kaufman of the United States Weather Office, located in the building on Washington Street east of the Chamber of Commerce and directly across from the Courthouse, read the anemometer on the roof and found that the wind was registering a speed of sixty miles per hour.[50] This velocity is undoubtedly much too high. The anemometers of the time were not always accurate in recording high velocities. A sixty mile wind would have blown Sergeant Kaufman off the roof.

At this time, Marshal Williams was in front of the West Side fire on Van Buren Street. Fearing for the safety of Fred Gund Engine No. 14, at the mouth of an alley on Van Buren Street near the bridge, he ordered Foreman Swenie to move it and asked several citizens to assist him. Being informed of the new fire on the South Side, he jumped on a hose cart and drove over to it. As for the Fred Gund, the men of the company continued to play a stream of water on the fire and a half-hour passed before they attempted to carry out the marshal's orders. They were then forced to flee from the flames. They did not unscrew the hose from the fire plug and when efforts to pull the engine free by a line of hose wrapped around its axle failed, they had to abandon the engine. When the fire burned the hose connection with the water plug the engine freed itself and rolled down the incline to the bridge approach in the alley, and after half an hour the walls of a burning building fell upon it and it was destroyed.[51] Williams now had but fourteen engines to fight two fires: one a raging sea of flames, three-quarters of a mile long and 150 acres in extent, and the other, across the river, one-quarter mile to the northeast,

[49] Andreas, *History of Chicago,* II: 719.

[50] Cregier narrative in the George M. Higginson Papers (MS collection in the Chicago Historical Society).

[51] Sheahan and Upton, *Great Conflagration,* 164-65; *Chicago Tribune,* Nov. 25, 1871, Oct. 9, 1893.

threatening the business district of the city.

When the fire reached the river at Van Buren Street the tenders of the bridge made an effort to save it. They rang the bell and warned everybody off, then swung the bridge, accelerating its turning by applying extra force to the lever. They ran to its western end and as it passed the eastern approach they jumped off on the South Side. However, as the western end left the west approach it caught fire and in a short time the flames were running up and down the wooden trusses. The bridge, impelled by air currents and the wind, swung idly to and fro like a huge piece of grotesque fireworks.

Those who believed the burned area of the Saturday night fire would act as a firebreak now became fearful for the safety of the Pittsburgh, Fort Wayne and Chicago Depot and the long trains of passenger cars in the yards. The depot was a wooden structure and if it had burned there would have been little chance of saving the West Side, but it and the cars were saved through the efforts of Illinois Engine Company No. 15 and the employees of the railroad.[52]

THE GAS WORKS TAKE FIRE

At 12:00 midnight, a burning brand was carried across the river and fell upon the tar house of the Chicago Gas Light and Coke Company, about one-quarter mile from the fire. The tar house took fire and the fire spread to another building of the works and to Powell's roofing plant adjoining. The gas works, with a daily capacity of 800,000 cubic feet, was working when the fire struck it. There were about 200,000 cubic feet of gas on hand in the two large gas holders. A rumor spread through the crowds in the street that the holders were going to explode. A panic ensued and the crowds fled from the vicinity in all directions. But Thomas B. Burtis, the night superintendent, had courageously stayed on the job, and fearful of the destruction an explosion of

[52] *Chicago Tribune,* Nov. 25, 1871; E. J. Goodspeed, *History of the Great Fires in Chicago and the West* (New York, c1871), 274.

the tanks would cause, very coolly opened the valves and sent the gas over to the reserve holders on the North Side. The tanks being of the expansion type dropped rapidly. Burtis also turned off the valves to the mains leading to the North and West sides. He could not turn off the supply to the South Side because the building in which the valves were located was on fire. The only light now in the city was the glare of the fire which lighted up the streets as if it were daytime. Some gas did escape but it burned as it leaked out of the joints and cracks in the apparatus which had been opened by the heat of the fire and there was no explosion. The fire spread rapidly through the plant and from it to the armory on Adams Street which was soon in flames. Some ammunition exploded as the building burned.[53]

CONLEY'S PATCH TAKES FIRE

At 12:20 A.M., October 9, a huge blazing brand was carried by a whirling eddy of superheated air for a distance of about one-quarter of a mile to the South Side. It fell on top of a large three-story frame tenement, on the north side of Adams Street in "Conley's Patch," an unsavory mess of shacks and shanties extending from the gas works to Wells Street between Adams and Monroe. The tenement became a raging mass of flames in an instant and from it fire spread throughout the patch in all directions as fast as a man could walk, reaching Monroe Street in one minute's time. There were now three separate fires burning on the South Side, two of which, that at the gas works and that in Conley's Patch, soon united.

The crowds which had crossed the river to the West Side to watch the fire, now fearful of what could happen to the South Side, reversed their trek and swarmed back across the Madison Street and other bridges, which were soon jammed with surging masses of humanity, broken only by the swinging of the bridges to

[53] Andreas, *History of Chicago,* II: 719; *Chicago Tribune,* Nov. 24 and 29, Dec. 3, 1871; Sheahan and Upton, *Great Conflagration,* 74.

permit tugs to tow vessels out of danger to the North Branch. At these interruptions, the crowd expressed its displeasure in no uncertain language. A few vessels took fire and burned alongside their docks, and the river itself also took fire, masses of grease, oil and combustible materials on its surface being ignited by sparks.[54]

The area from the river to Wells Street, between Adams and Monroe streets, became in a very short time a raging sea of destruction, a great fire that was far more threatening to the city than that on the West Side. This fire, covering three large city blocks, now moved forward to attack the business district, which lay directly before it to the northeast. It sent out two columns, one moving directly east and the other to the northeast. The east column, also spreading south at a rapid rate, soon joined the fire spreading east and north from the Parmelee building, and the whole formed a great fire which will be referred to hereafter as the "South Side Fire."

This fire was one continuous line of flame extending from Van Buren to Monroe Street, with two salients moving on the heart of the city, one advancing east and south from Jackson and Franklin streets, which for convenience will be called "the south column," and the other moving northeast, "the northeast column." These columns moved forward like armies sending out reconnoitering detachments. The drafts carried the flames before them by eddies and currents, extending the fire considerably. This was facilitated by the streets and alleys through which the flames swooped, swirled and rushed with fury. Masses of flames were detached from burning buildings and hurled some distance. The fire frequently entered buildings through the rear windows and doors and in an instant the front windows reddened and great curling flames burst out through the glass, licked the awnings and wooden signs, and ran up and down the fronts of the buildings. In a few minutes they were raging furnaces and their copper

[54] Andreas, *History of Chicago,* II: 720, 728-29; Sheahan and Upton, *Great Conflagration,* 67-77.

cornices were burning with fierce green flames.

By this time the heat had become intense and it greatly increased the power of the draft in the vicinity of the fires. This was especially the case on the east and west fronts. On the east front it blew in towards the fire at about thirty miles per hour and against the wind, so a decided counterclockwise, whirling motion was imparted to the columns of flame and smoke. Blazing timbers of considerable size were now whirled aloft and carried off to the north-northeast, starting new fires as they fell on the tar paper and gravel roofs or struck the fronts of the mansard top stories and cupolas of the business blocks. These new fires being in the line of the drift of smoke were invisible to those watching and fighting the main fires.

A few minutes before 1:00 o'clock, the South Side was struck again. This time a sudden puff of the variable draft and the wind blew down a curved wing of the great golden red clouds hanging in the sky. It fell like the shear of a sabre, and in a second a red glare shot up on the South Side, as if the blow had fallen upon a helmet and sent up a glitter of sparks and a spurt of blood. A small shed on the right bank of the South Branch near Polk Street was fired, but the blaze was quickly extinguished by tearing the shed down.[55]

THE COURTHOUSE BURNS

The waning moon rose at 12:40 A.M., shining dully through the pall of smoke hanging over the lake and on a scene that looked like Judgment Day. It was now apparent to all that the entire city was threatened with destruction, and Mayor Mason, who had gone to his office about midnight, wired appeals to cities throughout the country for firemen and apparatus to help stop the fire. All through these hours the Courthouse bell was rung to warn the people of the impending disaster.

From the time that Bateham's mills took fire the Courthouse was in danger of being ignited by the continuous stream of sparks

[55] Cox and Armington, *Weather and Climate,* App. III.

The Courthouse Before the Fire

and brands that was blown over it. Twice before midnight the roof caught fire but Watchman Schaffer stamped out the fires with his feet. At about 11:00 P.M. Schaffer, relieved by Denis Deneen, went to the fire, returning to the Courthouse at midnight when he again went out on the roof and put out the sparks as they fell. At 12:14 A.M. Operator Brown, running true to his earlier form, struck Box 13, Madison and Market streets.[56]

Under the balcony of the southwest side of the tower, one of the windows had been broken some time before and had not been repaired. Workmen making repairs inside the tower at this place had left shavings and waste material behind them. Sparks blown through the broken window set fire to these shavings as well as the inside of the roof. Schaffer crawled in under the roof, and aided by Brown, whose relief, George E. Fuller, had arrived about midnight, tried to extinguish the fire but their efforts proved unavailing as the rain of sparks and burning brands increased in volume.

At 1:30 A.M. a great burning timber, wrenched from some building on LaSalle Street and carried by a violent draft, pierced the top of the tower. It took fire and in an instant appeared to be completely deluged with flame which poured against the windows in a solid mass. Schaffer called to Deneen to come down from the tower before his way was blocked. Finding that they could not use the stairs, they slid down the banisters, Schaffer's whiskers being scorched and his hands and face badly burned. Everyone had to leave the building immediately.

Before Brown and Schaffer quit the building they set the machinery which operated the bell so that it boomed continuously in the midst of the fire. Schaffer told the jailer to release the prisoners in the basement or they would all be burned to death. Then Schaffer reported to Marshal Williams near the Sherman Hotel, across from the Courthouse at Randolph and Clark streets who put him to work as a pipeman on the A. C. Coventry Engine

[56] *Chicago Tribune,* Nov. 24, 1871.

Company No. 11, which was playing a stream on the hotel.

About ten minutes after the tower had taken fire, the central well and staircases of the Courthouse were a raging furnace from which the flames spread throughout the building, facilitated by the main halls. At 2:05 A.M. the great bell, ringing to the last, went booming down to the basement. At 2:20 A.M. the roof of the building fell in, and the west, east and north sides of the square were burning fiercely. Starting at the gas works at 12:20 A.M. the fire had burned a swath 400 to 500 feet wide and about a half-mile long, in a northeast direction. From the northwest front of this swath, the fire burned north on Market, Franklin and Wells streets, though at a slower rate.

Mayor Mason remained in his office in the upper part of the Courthouse until it was a mass of fire. Before he left he ordered the prisoners in the jail in the basement removed to a place of safety. He left the building by the LaSalle Street entrance and then decided to go to his home at Twelfth Street and Michigan Avenue. Looking south on LaSalle, west on Washington, east on Randolph, his way of escape was cut off by walls of flame. Going north on LaSalle he found his escape blocked by the fire near the river. Deciding to go to the North Side he tried going through the LaSalle Street tunnel but found it filled with a struggling mass of humanity and loaded vehicles, some trying to get to the North Side and others to the South Side, although it was still possible to cross the Wells Street bridge without difficulty. Crossing the bridge he made his way to the Rush Street bridge on which he crossed back to the South Side and reached his home at about 4:30 A.M. after a two mile walk around the front of the fire.[57]

Marshal Williams was constantly in front of the fire doing his utmost to stop it, but this was beyond the power of his men

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[57] *Chicago Tribune,* Nov. 24, 1871; Andreas, *History of Chicago,* 724, 725; Cox and Armington, *Weather and Climate,* App. III; Frank J. Loesch, *Personal Experiences During the Chicago Fire, 1871* (Chicago, 1925), 10, 11.

and the capacity of the apparatus. The strong drafts turned the water of the fire streams into spray as soon as it left the nozzles and the heat changed it into steam in an instant. The rapidly advancing wave of fire forced him to move the engines frequently to keep them from being destroyed.

POWDER IS USED

The fire had very early brought out city officials and others among whom was James H. Hildreth, war veteran and former alderman. Believing that the fire was moving faster than it could be handled by the firemen, he sought out Marshal Williams and advised him to resort to other measures. Williams replied that he was doing his best. Hildreth talked to one of the city engineers, who suggested to Williams that they should blow up or tear down buildings. Williams said that he knew nothing about using powder. Hildreth told him that he would furnish the powder if he was given authority to use it. The fire had not as yet set off Bateham's mills.

Hildreth went to a powder magazine with the Fire Insurance patrol wagon. He broke in the doors of the magazine but the keeper at first refused to let him have fuses, thus delaying him considerably. When he got the powder he took it to the Courthouse and searched for Williams and the Fire Commissioners. Meeting the Mayor, he explained what he wanted to do and about 1:00 A.M. the Mayor wrote orders authorizing him to proceed.

The Mayor suggested that he start with the Union National Bank, a four-story and basement building on the southwest corner of Washington and LaSalle. On LaSalle between Madison and Washington, Hildreth found Williams, who told him that he would stick to his engines, and warned him to be sure that everybody was out of the buildings before he set off the powder. Hildreth then determined to go ahead himself and secured a squad of police to carry the powder to the bank. Placing it in the basement he kicked in the heads of the kegs with his boot, spread the

powder, laid a train, and touched it off. It only blew through the building, breaking all the windows. He next tried to blow up the Nixon Block, but without effect. That used up all the powder and the Mayor said that he would send for more. Hildreth's first efforts to stop the fire by blowing up buildings accomplished nothing.[58]

THE FIRE STRIKES THE NORTH SIDE

At 1:30 A.M., the hour the Courthouse tower took fire, flying brands ignited the paint and carpenter shop of Lill's Brewery on the North Side at Chicago Avenue and Pine Street, across from the waterworks. The shop, a small wooden building, had been built at the foot of Superior Street out over the water, about eighty-five feet from the shore. This was done to prevent any fire that might occur in it from spreading to the main buildings of the brewery. It burned fiercely and in a few minutes only the charred stumps of the piles on which it had been built showed above the water of the lake.

At 2:25 A.M. the Courthouse and square were a veritable maelstrom of fire. Flames crackled, snapped, roared and leaped high into the sky, with regular pulsations sending up tremendous billows of smoke and masses of superheated air which carried showers of sparks and brands aloft and off to the northeast.

About 2:30 A.M. a train of cars containing kerosene caught fire on the tracks of the Chicago and Northwestern Railroad, at North State Street and the river, about three eighths of a mile from the Courthouse. In a moment, flames leaping from the burning cars set fire to Wright's stables, a three-story brick building, half a block long. The owners, understanding the danger to which their building was exposed since it was in the direct path of the fire, already had their more valuable horses hitched up ready to leave the building if the situation required,

[58] *Chicago Tribune,* Nov. 30, 1871; Sheahan and Upton, *Great Conflagration,* 167.

Courtesy of Harlow M. Church

Ruins of Chicago Fire, Showing Courthouse in Left Background

but so suddenly did the fire strike the building that many of them could not be saved.[59]

It was but a few moments until the oil cars, freight sheds, and other large buildings were another maelstrom of flame from which destruction spread rapidly to the north and west. The air here was filled with whirling masses of burning material about the size of pillows which were carried off to the northeast in front of the advancing wave of fire.

THE FIRE AGAIN STRIKES THE SOUTH SIDE

The O'Leary-Bateham Fire did not cross Jefferson Street. This was due to the work of the Little Giant No. 6, Chicago No. 5, Titsworth No. 13, and Illinois No. 15. With the exception of No. 15, they had taken initial positions along Jefferson Street, having come to the fire from the south. No. 15 took water at Des Plaines and Taylor streets. But for the work of these companies the West Side would have been destroyed and with it the entire city.

The Little Giant worked at the corner of Jefferson and De Koven until about 11:30 P.M. when Assistant Marshal Benner ordered it to the foot of Taylor Street. Before the company left, Foreman Musham secured a section of hose and attaching it to a plug, pressed some citizens into service to put a stream on the fire. The fire proved to be too hot and they soon dropped the pipe and abandoned the hose.

On arriving at its new post, the Little Giant found that the fire had worked its way to the south and set fire to the eastern one of two large warehouses of the Chicago Dock Company which were separated from each other only by a fire wall. In the warehouses were goods valued at $1,000,000. The company worked hard, along with others, to extinguish this fire and keep it from spreading to the yards of the Ryerson Lumber Company. This accomplished, it was found that the western warehouse was burn-

[59] Andreas, *History of Chicago,* II: 740-41.

ing under the peaked roof. This fire was most difficult to handle but it was subdued.[60] It was this work which saved the lumber yards and docks extending to the south along the west bank of the river.

All this time derivatives of the O'Leary-Bateham Fire were eating their way to the river bank devouring mills, sheds, and dwellings in their march. At 2:30 A.M. the fire leaped across the river in a single bound and set fire to a lumber yard lying south of Polk Street on the east bank. The Polk Street bridge, like that at Van Buren, had been turned to prevent its catching fire and like the last named, without success. As it burned it looked like a large piece of blazing lace work. The fire descended on the east bank so suddenly that many persons were barely able to save themselves from suffocation as they ran east through the hot, black smoke that filled the street in an instant.[61]

Another separate and distinct fire was now burning, making a total of five. Elements of this fire, which will be referred to as the "Polk Street Fire," burned north and east through a neighborhood similar to that on the west bank until an open stretch of ground on Pacific Avenue was reached. Here they burned out. Other elements made their way along the river, burning mills, freight sheds and dwellings and setting fire to the large Chicago and Rock Island depot and to several long trains of passenger cars.

In the meantime the fire at the gas works had eaten its way, against the wind, back to the river. Aided by brands from the fire on the west bank it set off the Adams Street bridge as well as the large Nelson elevator nearby which had been spared by the fire of the previous night.

THE ADVANCE OF THE SOUTH COLUMN OF FIRE

During this time the point of the south column of fire was making its way east on Jackson Street. At about 3:00 A.M. the

[60] *Chicago Evening Journal,* Nov. 24, 1871; *Chicago Tribune,* Oct. 9, Nov. 25, 1871.

[61] Andreas, *History of Chicago,* II: 730-31.

Grand Pacific Hotel on the northwest corner of Jackson and Clark streets, a huge new seven-story structure on which the roof had just been placed, took fire and soon became a mass of smoke and flame. The burning of this building intensified the south column which now moved north on LaSalle Street and at about 4:00 A.M. set fire to the Chamber of Commerce four blocks away, on the southeast corner of Washington and LaSalle across from the Courthouse. It also spread rapidly northeast to Dearborn, wiping out the new Bigelow House, the Honore and the Shepherd office buildings, bringing it up against the south walls of the Post Office and Customhouse. Another element moved north on Clark Street and on reaching Madison, turned east along the south side of the street to Dearborn, sweeping away the Reynolds Block. Still another element of the fire on Clark Street burned through the block from Clark Street and attacked it from the west.

The Post Office was well built. It had thick stone walls and its rear windows were provided with iron shutters, except in the basement and on the first floor, where they had been taken off when repairs were made in the spring.[62] The fire passed into the building through these unprotected windows and in a few minutes the interior of the building was a furnace.

The south column now proceeded to consolidate its gains by burning the spots to the west which it had skipped. Farther south it continued to burn east from the Rock Island depot. On Griswold Street it found another collection of shanties and hovels through which it burned rapidly making its way to the east and south to Harrison Street. At 7:00 A.M. there was no fire in that part of the city east of Dearborn and south of the river, except in a barber shop under the Tribune Building at the southeast corner of Dearborn and Madison streets. As the fire was within brick walls no damage to other parts of the building was expected. It was finally put out by Tribune employees.[63]

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[62] Andreas, *History of Chicago,* II: 721.
[63] *Chicago Tribune,* Dec. 2, 1871.

THE WATERWORKS BURN

On the North Side, the fire at Wright's stables tore off on a wild revel to the north through a neighborhood of frame dwellings and stately homes of old settlers. The latter were located in the centers of large lots and some of them occupied whole blocks. Most of the houses were of wood, though some were of brick or stone, and the stables, sheds and barns were generally of wood. They were surrounded by large trees which were thoroughly dry and the ground was covered with leaves. Around the houses were wooden sidewalks and picket fences. If the west side was a mass of kindling wood this part of the North Side can only be compared to a mass of lint. It was through this area that the Wright Fire roared at the rate of about one-half mile per hour, cutting the usual swath. At 3:00 A.M. the Rumsey residence, on the northeast corner of Cass and Huron streets, was a blazing torch.

The waterworks building, only a few years old, was built of stone and had a wooden roof covered with slate. No one had thought or even dreamed of the waterworks burning down and consequently no special measures had been taken to protect it. It stood in a block by itself with wide streets on two sides, a street and a park on the third, and the lake on the fourth. The only large building in the neighborhood was Lill's Brewery, directly across the street on Chicago Avenue.

The waterworks was in the direct path of the rain of sparks and brands that were swept over the city from almost the very start of the fire. Several times, the employees had extinguished fires on the roof, but at 3:20 A.M. a burning brand twelve feet long struck the northeast corner of the engine room. The roof took fire from the brand, caught and held by the turret on that part of the building, and the interior soon became a raging furnace. About the same time Lill's Malt House and Brewery took fire. Marshal Williams drove over to see the burning waterworks and he realized then that nothing could save the city.

From these two buildings the fire spread to the south, west and north. In a few minutes the whole neighborhood became a

Courtesy of Harlow M. Church

RUINS OF GRAND PACIFIC HOTEL

sea of fire which burned north along the shore for a quarter of a mile. The men on duty in the waterworks remained at their posts until about 3:30 A.M. when a portion of the roof fell in. The engines were stopped, the fires in the boilers drawn, the safety valves raised and tied in position with ropes—but the ropes burned, letting the valves down. The fire surrounded the boilers and the rising steam pressure threatened to explode them, but the fire in the engine room melted the main steam pipe, seventeen inches in diameter, allowing the steam to escape and that danger was averted. The water tower, in the park to the west of the main building, was but little damaged and continued to furnish water as long as the stored supply lasted, which was not very long. When it failed, the fire engines became useless except along the river and the lake shore.

The Galena elevator, on the river front between State and Rush streets, did not burn when the oil cars took fire at 2:30 A.M. although it was but 100 or 200 feet away to the east. After starting on its run to the waterworks, the fire burned to the west between the river and Kinzie Street, through a mass of freight sheds, mills, warehouses, large wholesale stores, meat establishments and dwellings. At dawn it reached the Chicago and Northwestern depot at Kinzie and North Wells streets.

In the meantime the fire was eating its way west from the swath burned earlier in the morning from Wright's stables. At 6:00 A.M. this fire was at Dearborn and Erie streets and the steeple of the Holy Name Cathedral was burning fiercely. In a short time the church was a blazing mass of ruins. Before the church took fire small eddying spirals of smoke issued from the crevices in the slate roof. These rose vertically a few feet, then burned with a bright flame.[64]

[64] Andreas, *History of Chicago,* II: 719, 741-42, 752, 754; Sheahan and Upton, *Great Conflagration,* 109, 168.

THE RETAIL DISTRICT BURNS

The northeast column of the South Side Fire, after wiping out the Courthouse square, continued to the northeast cutting a swath 400 to 500 feet wide. The Sherman House, directly northeast of the Courthouse on the northwest corner of Clark and Randolph streets, went down before it in spite of the efforts of Marshal Williams to save it. Crossing Clark it mowed down Hooley's Opera House, Wood's Museum, the Matteson House and the Tremont House. Reaching Lake Street it reaped a rich harvest. Here was the center of the retail district. The street was lined with large stores filled with goods of all kinds for the fall and winter trade. They were abandoned on the approach of the fire. Thieves forced their way into the shops and looted them, throwing out merchandise to their fellows in the street who received it without disguise and fought over it openly.

Elements on the north flank of this column of the fire moved slowly north on Market, Franklin and Wells streets. That on Market burned north and west to the South Branch. Reaching Randolph Street it attacked the Lind Block at the bridge. Here it was defeated by the efforts of some of the tenants who prepared to meet it as it approached. As the building was located on the South Branch there was plenty of water available. All wooden signs and other combustible material were removed from the fronts exposed to the fire. When the fire struck, water was poured on the roof and walls. Several times it was thought that the battle would have to be given up, but courage and perseverance brought their reward. When the wave of fire passed, the Lind Block, scarred and defiant, was still standing.

The fires on Franklin and Wells streets advanced at a steady pace to the south bank of the river which they reached at about 7:00 A.M. From them sparks and brands were blown across the stream and, assisted by the fire burning west from Wright's stables, set off the Northwestern elevator, the freight sheds of the railroads and the lumber yards and mills nearby. The whole triangle between the east flank of the northeast column, the South

Branch and the main river, was now a sea of flames with its peak at the Rush Street bridge which was also reached at about the same time.[65]

HOW THE PEOPLE TOOK THE FIRE

As early as midnight the air in the business district was hot with the fierce breath of the fire. On its front it was impossible to approach closer than one block. Drafts blew savagely from all directions and threw about showers of pelting cinders, blazing bits of wood, glowing coals and clouds of hot, black suffocating smoke. They were so strong that a husky man could hardly stand or make his way against them. As the night passed, what had started out as "just another fire," a neighborhood incident, turned into an overwhelming flood of flame which was pouring over the city in streams. When the fire jumped the South Branch and set off the South Side, the hope that the business district would be spared turned into a panic of wild alarm. After it hit the North Side and the waterworks burned it became one of despair. Restraint vanished in the large crowds that had turned out to witness the awesome spectacle. The vicious element had early made its appearance and added to the tumult. The police were unable to control the crowds and maintain order. About half of the force was on duty when the fire broke out and it was impossible under the circumstances to assemble the remainder. It would have taken many times 425 men to have kept the city under control in the face of the disaster which was destroying it.

Before the Courthouse burned, the square was filled with people who appeared to be huddled together in a solid mass, helpless and astounded. The whole air was filled with a rain of sparks and the sidewalks were carpeted with them. The scene resembled a snowstorm with the flakes lighted up with colored

[65] Blanchard, *Discovery of the Northwest,* 691; Andreas, *History of Chicago,* II: 736, 759; Mabel McIlvaine, ed., *Reminiscences of Chicago During the Great Fire* (Chicago, 1915), xxv.

fire. The weird effect of the glare and the scintillating light upon this vast silent concourse was frightful. Dearborn Street, south of the Tremont House at Lake Street, was filled with a mass of people swaying back and forth, yelling and moaning with excitement and fright. They crowded on frail points of vantage, such as high fences and awnings built up on wooden posts which fell beneath their weight, hurling them bruised and bleeding into the dust. The streets were filled with furniture and the stocks of the stores. Over all this the people stumbled, some falling to the ground and being trampled under foot. Seized with wild senseless panic they surged backward and forward in the narrow streets, cursing, threatening, imploring, and fighting to get free.

The crowds thickened every minute, women with babies and bundles, men with kegs of beer, boys with their dogs, and little girls with their dolls and kittens, all jostling, scolding, crying or swearing. Men carried boxes and dragged trunks along the streets, while women staggered on with their arms full of homely household wares, mattresses and blankets which at times took fire as they walked. Some were philosophical, even merry, and witnessed the loss of their property with a calm shrug of the shoulders. Others, even strong men, became frenzied at the thought of losing the work of a lifetime and rushed about aimlessly, almost too delirious to save their own lives. The utmost disorder and excitement prevailed. Mobs of men and women rushed wildly from street to street, screaming, gesticulating and shouting, crossing each other's paths, all behaving as if they had just escaped from a madhouse. Local Jeremiahs went about raising their hands and crying that the fire was the judgment of the Almighty on Chicago for its wickedness.

Barrels of spirits were rolled into the streets by saloon keepers and liquor dealers in the hope that they could be removed to a place of safety. This being impossible they were broken open and strong drink flowed like water. Liquor pouring into the gutter took fire from the heat and sparks and it flowed in weird streams of flickering blue flames to the sewers. At times accumu-

Courtesy of Harlow M. Church

WATER TOWER AFTER THE FIRE

lations of sewer gas exploded with a roar.

Some men had stolen fire hats and were seen staggering about in a drunken manner. They were naturally mistaken for firemen. Pipeman Conway, temporarily in charge of Chicago Engine No. 5 working along the river, had his helmet snatched from his head. He appealed to a policeman to regain it. In the scuffle the officer pushed the culprit into the stream and he and the hat disappeared into the murky water with a splash that rippled away in widening rings of reflected fire.[66]

Streets leading away from the fire were filled with vehicles of all descriptions loaded down with men, women, children, goods and furnishings of all kinds. Expressmen reaped a harvest demanding exorbitant charges for their services, frequently holding people up for more money on threat of dumping their property in the streets. Property moved out of the first danger zone was often burned before it could be moved a second time. The lake shore, Michigan Avenue and nearby streets were covered with goods and furniture placed there in the hope that the fire would not reach them. For blocks and blocks south of the business district the people in a sort of wild madness did nothing but throw furniture out of the windows of houses they thought were certain to be destroyed. Through this litter the fire raged.

When it became apparent in the early morning hours that the North Side was doomed a terrible panic ensued. A sudden rushing about of frantic people took place, all screaming for help and vehicles. They rushed pell-mell through the streets, some going in one direction and others in the opposite. Here again there was a rush to the lake shore where they thought that they would be safe. Others made their way to the Chicago Avenue and Division Street bridges which they crossed in steady streams to the West Side and to safety on the prairies.

The fire of course had its humorous side. Men were seen

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[66] Sheahan and Upton, *Great Conflagration,* 90-91, 119; Goodspeed, *History of the Great Fires,* 218; Andreas, *History of Chicago,* II: 725-26, 728, 730, 735-36; *Chicago Tribune,* Nov. 26, 1871.

carrying the most useless articles out of houses and leaving the more valuable to be burned. One man walked down the street carrying a kerosene lamp. Some, retaining presence of mind, buried their valuables in their back yards. One energetic householder on the North Side, determined to be warm throughout the coming winter, spent the early morning hours feverishly digging a large deep hole in his yard into which he shoveled his supply of hard coal which he very carefully covered over with earth—only to see the fire sweep by one block to the east just as he finished.

In some cases friends of deceased persons carried the corpses to places of safety. Where this was not possible they were left to burn in the houses. One enterprising undertaker with an eye to coming business hired boys to carry his stock of caskets out of reach of the flames. They put them over their heads and crossed the river with the boxes bobbing up and down as they walked along.

Throughout the long night locomotives chugged, snorted and whistled as they moved long trains of cars out of depots and freight yards. Fire engines puffed away at their short and frequently changing stands. Their shrill whistles calling for coal rose above the howling of the draft and the crackling of the flames. The reverberations of crashing walls and falling floors shook the ground as they collapsed. The din was terrific and the roar of the fire was that of the sea in a heavy gale.

Some, after seeing the fire in its early stages and not believing it to be serious, went home and retired only to be routed out in the early morning by the flames. Others living on the West and far South sides paid no attention to the fire at all and slept through the entire night. They were amazed on waking Monday morning to find a large part of the city already destroyed and the fire still raging.

THE DAWN OF MONDAY, OCTOBER 9

At daybreak the magnitude of the catastrophe became more apparent. Where a large part of the city had been, was nothing

but prairie. There was no fire on the West Side except in spots along the river and in the smoldering ruins of the larger buildings. Where the O'Leary barn had stood lay the badly burned carcass of a cow. Immediately behind it lay the remains of a table lamp, and sticking up in the floor was the wooden leg of "Peg Leg" Sullivan with the partially burned straps still attached.[67] The scorched calf which he had saved was standing with a forlorn look on its face in the vacant lot across from O'Leary's place and—as if craving human companionship—next to a cradle in which was the infant son of Mr. and Mrs. William Lee. The baby's mother had watched over it all through the long fearful hours of the night.

In the rear of the advancing belts of fire on the South and North sides, the ruins were cooling off. Wooden structures in the line of the fire had been reduced to ashes as had been the sidewalks. The wooden pavements of the streets were still intact, but seriated ridges and shallow depressions about one-half inch deep had been burned in them in places. The fire could be approached from the rear although the ground and pavements were still hot, and there was still greater danger from falling walls.[68]

The sun rose at 6:05 A.M., a red ball glowing dully through the pall of smoke that hung over the city. Unofficial observations placed the temperature at sixty-seven degrees. There were no clouds in the sky and the wind was blowing twenty-five miles an hour, still from the southwest. The United States Weather Office at Washington, in its synopsis for the previous twenty-four hours, reported: "Brisk south and southwesterly winds, with smoky weather, have continued on the upper lakes as far as heard from, and threatening weather, with light rain has prevailed north and northwest of Missouri." It also stated: "The probabilities are that the threatening weather in the Missouri Valley will probably move northeastward over Lake Michigan."

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[67] Musham, Notes on the Chicago Fire.

[68] McIlvaine, ed., *Reminiscences of Chicago During the Great Fire,* 57-58.

As the day passed, the temperature, according to unofficial sources, rose to eighty-two degrees at 2:00 P.M. and the wind increased to sixty miles an hour, a strong gale, still blowing from the southwest. Most likely this observation was taken in the vicinity of the fire. The day was clear and bright except for the clouds of smoke from the fire.[69]

THE FIRE AGAIN STRIKES THE NORTH SIDE

Firebrands and sparks blown across the river from the northeast column set the large Galena elevator near the Rush Street bridge on fire at 7:00 A.M. The northeast column then turned east along the south bank of the river and set fire to the Marine Hospital, more lumber yards, the last remaining building of Fort Dearborn, the Illinois Central Railroad depot, its freight yards, sheds and Elevator A at the river mouth. A sudden veering of the wind around from the lake saved Elevator B, about a hundred feet east of A.

The Galena fire, a new maelstrom of flame and destruction, moved in two directions, to the east and northeast. The Lake House on Rush Street and the McCormick Harvester Works one block east were its first victims. The fire then set out to destroy the area between the lake and the east line of the earlier Wright's stables fire. This area was full of wooden dwellings, shacks and shanties. At about Erie Street and the lake was a large wooden bathhouse and just south of this were an immense varnish factory, an oil refinery and a long range of sheds in which were stored barrels of tar and salt. South of these buildings was the area, limited in extent, known as the "Sands." The people who had earlier taken refuge in this district with such property as they could carry now found themselves joined by a multitude forced out of their homes by this latest advance of the fire.

The bathhouse took fire at 9:00 A.M. and was soon a mass of roaring flames which set off the varnish factory, the oil refinery

[69] Musham, Notes on the Weather at the Time of the Chicago Fire.

and the sheds. This fire forced those on the beach toward the North Pier which extended out into the lake at the river mouth. The pier soon became crowded with people trying to get away from the smoke or heat. Numbers of people on the beach took refuge in the lake where they stood immersed up to their necks.

An element of fire from the McCormick works attacked the lumber yards along the river and nearby streets and advanced directly on the pier at the land end of which were some large lumber yards. The people on the pier now found themselves cut off from the land by fire, and there was no way of escape except by water. They faced death either by fire or water. Fortunately their frantic cries and signals were heard and seen during the afternoon by steamer and tugboat captains who put in to the pier and took them off. In the end the pier did not burn.

One prominent citizen hired a tug to take himself and party up the river to the rear of the fire. They made slow progress for careful handling was necessary to pass the ruins of the Rush, State, Clark and Wells street bridges. A man stood by with a stream of water to cool the craft and put out any sparks that might fall upon it. The tug steamed up the river between 3:00 and 4:00 P.M., through two walls of still burning elevators, sheds and lumber yards. The heat was terrific and the air was full of smoke as far as Wells Street. The trip was made safely and the party was landed beyond the fire on the West Side at Lake Street.[70]

THE NEW FIREPROOF TRIBUNE BUILDING BURNS

The new Tribune Building on the southeast corner of Dearborn and Madison streets so far had withstood all attacks. When the flames advancing east on Madison reached that corner, a huge column of fire shot north, diagonally across Dearborn Street, and

[70] McIlvaine, ed., *Reminiscences of Chicago During the Great Fire,* xxv; Goodspeed, *History of the Great Fires,* 153-55, 239, 388; Sheahan and Upton, *Great Conflagration,* 293; Elias Colbert and Everett Chamberlain, *Chicago and the Great Conflagration* (Cincinnati, 1871), 260-61; Andreas, *History of Chicago,* II: 749.

the Dearborn Theatre on the east side just north of Madison burst into flames. The threatre became another center of fire which spread destruction to the front, the right and the left. On the left it went east on Washington Street setting off Crosby's Opera House. The latter then became another raging furnace and the fire from it burned east to State Street setting off Booksellers' Row on the east side between Madison and Washington streets.

The right flank burned south to Madison Street across from the Tribune Building. The fire moving east on Monroe Street set fire to the buildings adjoining it on the south but withstood both of these attacks for a time. At 9:00 A.M. the new Palmer House, on the northwest corner of Quincy and State streets, was fired by elements of the Parmelee and Grand Pacific Hotel fire which had been moving steadily east on Jackson Street. The burning of this large structure reinforced that fire, and it turned north traveling up State Street with frightful rapidity. Approaching Madison Street it turned west and set off McVicker's Theatre just east of the Tribune Building. The theatre burned rapidly and this third onset of the fire was too much for the latter. A large burning plank was blown onto its roof and in a short time the building, which had been heated to an intense degree by the previous attacks, was a mass of flames which soon reduced it to a smouldering ruin.

The south flank of the Parmelee-Grand Pacific Fire continued to burn east with Harrison Street as its south limit. Several fire engines worked on this fire. There being no water in the water mains, four engines were lined up in series: the T. B. Brown No. 12, taking water at the lake shore, pumped into the J. B. Rice No. 10, on Michigan Avenue, which pumped into the Little Giant No. 6 on Wabash Avenue, and it pumped into the Long John No. 1 on State Street. From the Long John a line of hose was laid through Rice's Engine House on the west side of the street and a small stream was put on the fire. At this time the fire was burning on a front about three miles long.

Commissioner Mark Sheridan, of the Board of Police, who

Courtesy of Harlow M. Church

SMOKING RUINS OF THE FIRE

Cathedral of the Holy Name, left; St. James's Episcopal Church, right

was present on the south line of the fire, believed that the fire engines could be used to fill the water mains. He wrote an order directing four of them to go to the waterworks to take the place of the large engines there which had been put out of service by the burning of the building in which they were housed. For some reason the order was not obeyed. It was, however, impractical even if connections could have been made between the fire engines and the mains, for their combined capacity was far too small for the purpose.[71]

WABASH AVENUE BURNS POWDER IS USED ONCE MORE

The northeast column, after setting fire to Elevator A and the Illinois Central depot and yards, now almost reversed its course. It turned south and burned more slowly down Michigan and Wabash avenues which, near the river, were lined with large wholesale establishments filled with large stocks of goods for the coming fall and winter seasons. From the buildings on the west side of Wabash Avenue the fire passed without difficulty through the rear windows into the buildings fronting on State Street. Field and Leiter's large retail store on the northeast corner of State and Washington streets was fired in this manner. Vain efforts were made to save the building by wetting the sides and flooding the roof but the water supply from the pumps in the building gave out and the employees were forced to leave the building. In a short time it was a mass of smoke and flame.

West of State Street the fire had stopped hours before. The fire now continued to move south toward that element of the Parmelee-Grand Pacific Fire which had turned north when it reached State Street.

A large supply of powder having been secured, more of it was turned over to Hildreth. He did not know where to start his demolition operations. He asked several citizens where to begin but they knew no more than he did and would not advise him.

[71] Sheahan and Upton, *Great Conflagration*, 77-78; *Chicago Tribune*, Dec. 3, 1871, Oct. 9, 1893.

He finally went to the south limit of the fire at Harrison and State streets, where he blew up several buildings on Harrison between State Street and Wabash Avenue.

The Polk Street Fire in its progress east from the Rock Island depot did not burn buildings on the south side of Harrison Street. On the north side of the street it skipped buildings here and there. It was not burning very fiercely at this time. Continuing its advance eastward, it was deflected to the northeast by the large stone building of the Wabash Avenue Methodist Episcopal Church on the northeast corner of Wabash Avenue and Harrison Street. The belfry took fire while Hildreth was in the neighborhood with his powder. He had placed several kegs of it in the basement and was going to blow it up, but the minister, the Reverend Simon McChesney, got down on his knees and begged that the church be spared. Hildreth finally relented and the church was allowed to stand. Some of the congregation went to work on the fire and were successful in extinguishing it.

General Philip Sheridan, commanding officer of the Department of the Missouri with headquarters in Chicago, took a hand in trying to stop the fire on Wabash Avenue though he had been told by Ben Bullwinkle of the Fire Insurance Patrol that it was useless. He sent to Hildreth for some of the powder, but Hildreth refused, telling the messenger to tell the General just where he could go. Attempts to demolish buildings had no effect whatsoever as it took at least an hour of preparation before the powder could be touched off and the buildings burned before this could be done. Nor did tearing down the smaller ones have any effect, as very little could be done before the fire was upon them and because the wrecked material remained on the ground and burned. Colonel O. M. Hodges in a great jesture started to wreck his own home. He tried to pull it down with a rope while General Sheridan chopped away at it with an axe. The fire, however, as if appreciating the situation, veered to the north and passed them up.[72]

[72] Sheahan and Upton, *Great Conflagration,* 79; *Chicago Tribune,* Nov. 30, 1871.

THE FIRE SWEEPS THE NORTH SIDE

The burning of the Northwestern depot and the large elevator at the forks of the river generated another tremendous center of fire which, like that at Wright's stables a half mile to the east, raged off to the northeast on another wild career of destruction cutting the usual swath which ended at Division Street and the lake. On the right it spread east through the intersecting streets and alleys until it joined the fires working west from the swath burned hours earlier. On its left it burned straight through to the river.

Early in the morning three fire engine companies arrived from Milwaukee at the Northwestern depot on the west bank of the river at Kinzie Street. They were immediately put to work on the North Side along the river. With the assistance they gave the Chicago firemen several blocks were saved adjacent to the river as far north as Ohio Street.

On its course to the northeast the fire burned through the usual mills and lumber yards near the river and for several blocks through a neighborhood similar to that in which the fire started. Farther to the north, where there were many trees, leaves were scattered over the ground or raked neatly in piles. The houses were larger and farther apart but practically all of frame construction. In their yards were the usual barns, sheds and outhouses.

Through this neighborhood the fire progressed with remarkable speed, though at 9:00 A.M. the wind blowing over the city from the southwest had a velocity of only twenty-five miles per hour. However, in the immediate vicinity of the fire, the draft blew with the force of a hurricane, lifting up whole buildings and throwing them on top of others. This caused the fire to progress along the tops of the buildings before the wind and along the bases against it. As the fire moved forward it was preceded by a deep zone of intensely heated air which preheated houses and their contents to the point of combustion. As it came nearer, black smoke—evidently from the furnishings—frequently poured out of

chimneys, doors and windows far in advance of the flames. Then the houses would suddenly burst into flames, fired most likely by a spark or brand carried forward by the light wind or some eddy of heated air. These new fires set whole blocks ablaze before the main wave of fire reached them, adding to the rapidity with which the city was destroyed. People living in houses on the front and flanks of the fire barely had time to get out of their front doors before the fire entered at the rear.

At 9:00 A.M. the fire was at Oak and LaSalle streets, making rapid progress to the north. Behind the front the area from the North Branch to the lake was nothing but smoking ruins with buildings of large size blazing here and there. By noon the advanced elements of the fire had reached Lincoln Park. On reaching North Avenue the fire ran through the cemeteries, scorching the grass and trees, burning the wooden grave markers and household goods piled there. It drove many people—including patients of the pesthouse on the lake shore—into the water. Hildreth showed up at about this time at North Clark Street and North Avenue with his wagon load of powder, having finished his work of demolition along Congress Street. He asked people to help him but when he mentioned powder they all ran. Going to work himself he blew up several buildings but this did not halt the flames. They continued to burn along the west line of the park in which they seared the trees.

On the west flank north of Ohio Street the firemen were able to do very little because of the blocked street ends along the river. The fire ran along the east bank of the North Branch until it reached a point three blocks north of Chicago Avenue. From there it moved directly north, driving the people before it to the Division Street bridge and to the outskirts of the city. The gas works at Division and the canal were saved by the open ground about them, the fire passing them by and continuing to the north though at a slower rate. Two companies, Chicago No. 5, and one from Springfield, Illinois did good work at this point.[73]

[73] *Report of Board of Police,* 1872, p. 15; Cox and Armington, *Weather*

Courtesy of Harlow M. Church

Smoking Ruins of the Fire From the Corner of Lake and Clark Streets

THE WEST SIDE IS THREATENED AGAIN

The O'Leary-Bateham Fire had long since burned itself out and the people of the West Side were much relieved, but their fears were aroused once more in the late morning. At about 12:00 noon derivatives of the fire on the South Side had burned back to the river and set fire to the distilleries at the Madison Street bridge. The large Oriental flour mills on the west bank were now threatened with destruction. If they burned there was danger that the fire would work its way west and north and destroy the West Side. This catastrophe was averted by the employees of the mills who kept them wet with water from their own pumps.[74]

THE FIRE BURNS OUT ON THE SOUTH SIDE

Early in the afternoon the last elements of the northeast column joined those of the south column. The two fires, now one, soon cleaned up the unburned area north of Congress Street. The last building on the South Side to burn was Terrace Row, a four-story marble and stone residence block on Michigan Avenue, between Van Buren and Harrison streets. It took fire at 3:00 P.M., seventeen and a half hours after the O'Leary cow kicked over the lamp at 137 De Koven Street, one mile to the southwest. At this time, an observer in the belfry of the Wabash Avenue Methodist Church would have seen smoking ruins extending southwest for one mile, northeast for two miles, and north for about three. Between State Street and the lake was a line of smoking and burning buildings, and far to the north one could still see the flames and smoke of the last elements of the Wright's stables and Northwestern elevator fires, eating their way to the city limits at Fullerton Avenue.

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and Climate, App. III; Sheahan and Upton, *Great Conflagration,* 109; Goodspeed, *History of the Great Fires,* 150; *Chicago Tribune,* Nov. 26 and 30, 1871.

[74] Sheahan and Upton, *Great Conflagration,* 85; Andreas, *History of Chicago,* II: 738.

THE FIRE ENDS

The western flank of the fire continued to burn north as the afternoon waned and evening came on, its western limit being an irregular line between Halsted and Larrabee streets, extending as far north as Fullerton Avenue. About 5:00 P.M. the Chicago Avenue bridge took fire from some burning ruins nearby and it was soon reduced to a ruin of red-hot tangled iron bars which fell hissing into the river. As the sun went down, a gleaming ball of fire shining dully through the haze of smoke on a scene of widespread desolation, the wind died down to the same gentle, rustling, southwest breeze of the previous evening.

By nightfall the fire was out all over the city except in the neighborhood of Clark Street and Fullerton Avenue where it still burned fitfully. In the early hours of the night, clouds appeared in the sky. The threatening weather from the Missouri Valley had arrived in the vicinity of Lake Michigan as predicted by the United States Weather Office. About 11:00 P.M. a light drizzling rain started to fall. No people were ever more grateful than those of Chicago when they felt it on their faces and heard it pattering on the roofs and the ground, even though it had come one day too late to save their city. Between 2:00 and 4:00 A.M. the fire died out. During the night the burning coal piles along the South Branch flared up once more, frightening the people of the West Side who thought that the fire might return and destroy what was left of that part of the city.

The last house to burn was that of John A. Huck, on the north side of Fullerton Avenue near the lake shore. From Harrison Street to Fullerton Avenue there was nothing but smoking ruins. In hundreds of cellars coal piles were burning, casting a weird ruddy glow on a scene of complete desolation.[75]

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[75] Goodspeed, *History of the Great Fires,* 201, 399; McIlvaine, ed., *Reminiscences of Chicago During the Great Fire,* 125; Andreas, *History of Chicago,* II: 759.

AFTER THE FIRE

The dawn of Tuesday, October 10, presented a scene of appalling desolation to the frightened people. An area four and three-quarter miles long from north to south, with an average width of one mile, had been wiped out in the short period of about thirty hours. What had been a prosperous business and industrial district was now nothing but occasional piles of stone and brick. Broken walls marked the sites of the brick and stone buildings while nothing but a layer of ashes showed where frame buildings formerly stood. That part of the West Side where the fire originated was swept clean as was almost all of the North Side. The heat of the fire had been so intense that iron and steel were melted, stone was flaked, and marble was reduced to a powder.

Within the burned area of the West Side, the only buildings left standing were seven scattered houses on the east side of Jefferson Street, the Oriental flour mills and the Pittsburgh, Fort Wayne and Chicago depot.[76] The O'Leary houses did not burn and the west side of the barn was still standing when the fire started on its initial move to the north.

On the South Side, the only buildings left were one unfinished at LaSalle and Monroe streets, and the Lind Block at Market and Randolph. With these exceptions the entire business district was wiped out. At the mouth of the river Elevator B stood as a lone sentry.

On the North Side there were two houses spared: a two-story frame building belonging to Messrs. Brown and Van Arsdale, near Hubbard and Kingsbury streets, and the house of Mahlon Ogden at Dearborn and White streets. The fire burned the Ogden barn, the fences and sidewalks around it, and scorched the trees. The house was a large square frame structure with porches and stood in the center of a large block. It was saved by

[76] Andreas, *History of Chicago,* II: 714; Sheahan and Upton, *Great Conflagration,* 70.

covering the exposed places with carpets and blankets which were kept wet as long as the danger of burning lasted.

Another house was saved in a similar manner. Policeman Richard Bellinger, living on Lincoln Place near Sophia (now 2121 Hudson Avenue) determined that if were humanly possible his house, a small frame cottage, would be saved from destruction. He prepared to fight the fire as it approached, on the afternoon of October 9. He raked up the leaves in the yard, tore down the fences, tore up the sidewalks and burned them. He covered the house with carpets and blankets, wet them and the house, and kept them wet as long as the water in the cistern lasted. When that gave out he carried water from a pool across the street and a ditch on Clark Street two blocks east. He had a constant battle with the sparks and the brands during the fire, but he won out, and his cottage was the only one standing in the neighborhood after the fire passed northward.

W. D. Kerfoot, a real estate man not at all subdued by the great catastrophe and the losses he had sustained, was the first to resume business operations. Tuesday morning he built a twelve by sixteen foot shack and opened it for business.[77]

Cities throughout the country had been generous in sending fire engines to Chicago to aid in fighting the fire. In response to Mayor Mason's telegrams, a total of twenty-five engine companies were sent from Milwaukee, Freeport, Aurora, Springfield, Bloomington, Indianapolis, Cincinnati, St. Louis, Louisville, Detroit, Pittsburgh and New York. Some arrived while the fire was still burning and did valuable work in limiting its progress to the south and at the forks of the river. Others were used to relieve the companies of the Chicago Fire Department which were badly in need of rest. The possibility of destruction of the unburned part of the city was acute, due to the disablement of the waterworks and the dry weather. Several of the companies, including those from New York, remained for several weeks until the city

[77] Musham, Notes on the Chicago Fire; Andreas, *History of Chicago*, II: 749, 759; III: 61-62.

The First Building Erected After the Fire

was once again on its feet.

LOSSES

The fire burned an area of 3.32 square miles and destroyed houses as follows:

District	*Area burned*	*Houses burned*
West Side:	194 acres	500
South Side:	460 "	3,650
North Side:	1,470 "	13,300
	2,124 acres	17,450 houses

While the North Side was the principal sufferer in the number of people made homeless, the South Side was the heaviest loser in value of property destroyed.[78]

While the fire was still burning, the more responsible people were asking the question, "What is to be done now?" About 90,000 people were without homes, food, clothing or shelter. Their opportunities for making a living were gone, which was also true of many who had not been burned out, and the winter was coming on. Further, there was the fear that fire would destroy the remainder of the city, since the water supply had been cut off by the destruction of the waterworks. The Fire Department suffered heavily, losing three fire engines and nine engine houses.

The city government had almost ceased to function. While the Fire Department retained its organization, the Police Department had not. What there was of it could not be of much use in restraining the criminal elements which always raise their ugly heads in catastrophes of this nature. The president of the Common Council, C. C. P. Holden, realizing the need for prompt action, looked around for Mayor Mason and the aldermen. Not being able to find them, he, in conjunction with a number of responsible citizens, called a meeting at the Congregational Church

[78] Andreas, *History of Chicago,* II: 760, 761.

at Washington and May streets to provide ways and means for handling the situation. The Mayor was finally located and at 5:00 P.M., October 9, a proclamation was issued stating that order would be preserved and that the police and special police being appointed were charged with the duty of preserving peace and protecting property. The members of the Fire and Health departments were also appointed special police, and inside of twenty-four hours about 5,000 citizens had been sworn in in that capacity. The sale of liquor in saloons was forbidden until further notice.[79]

General Sheridan was among the first to realize the full extent of the tragedy. On October 9, on his own responsibility, he ordered two companies of infantry to the city from Fort Omaha and tents and supplies from the depot of the Army at Jeffersonville, Indiana.

A temporary relief committee was organized which opened the schools and the churches to the sufferers. A lost and found department was set up, and arrangements were made for a temporary supply of water until the waterworks could resume operation. The railroads provided free transportation for those who wished to leave the city. In the afternoon, supplies of all kinds began to arrive. Eating rooms and ration points were opened. To prevent profiteering in bread, on October 10 the Mayor directed that the price of bread be fixed at eight cents for a twelve ounce loaf.[80]

It was soon apparent that the appointment of special police would not be a satisfactory solution to the pressing problem of maintaining order. The Mayor requested the aid of General Sheridan and on October 11, entrusted the city to him. The orders establishing the special police were revoked. The next day ten companies of regular infantry, and seven of state troops were on patrol duty. A volunteer regiment of eighteen companies, "The First Chicago Volunteers," Colonel Francis T. Sherman

[79] Andreas, *History of Chicago*, II: 764.
[80] *Ibid.*, 766.

NOTICE.

Chicago, October 10, 1871.

The following Ordinance was passed at a meeting of the Common Council of the City of Chicago, on the 10th day of October, A. D. 1871:

AN ORDINANCE.

Be it ordained by the Common Council of the City of Chicago.

SECTION 1.—That the Price of Bread in the City of Chicago for the next 10 days is hereby fixed and established at ***Eight (8) Cents per Loaf*** of 12 ounces, and at the same rate for all Loaves of less or greater weight.

SECTION 2.—Any person selling or attempting to sell any bread within the City of Chicago within said 10 days, at a greater price than is fixed in this Ordinance, shall be liable to a penalty of ten (10) dollars for each and every offence, to be collected as other penalties for violation of City Ordinances.

SECTION 3.—This Ordinance shall be in full force and effect from and after its passage.

Approved October 10th, 1871.

R. B. MASON, Mayor.

Attest: N. HOTCHKISS, City Clerk.

THE MAYOR'S PROCLAMATION

commanding, was organized for twenty days' service, and the whole city was put under military control. Peace and order soon emerged out of the chaos.

The military occupation of the city aroused the ire of Governor John M. Palmer who stated that it was an invasion of state rights, that it was illegal and unnecessary and that the Mayor had abdicated his authority to General Sheridan. There were naturally other complaints from disgruntled citizens who did not like the restraint put on their movements by the military guards.

The matter came to a head on the evening of October 21, when Colonel Thomas W. Grosvenor, a well-known citizen and war veteran, was shot by a volunteer guard while returning to his home near the University of Chicago. He had refused to halt on the challenge of a volunteer guard, telling him to "go to hell." Having been a soldier, he should have known better. He died a few hours afterward. This raised a great clamor and the next day the Mayor asked General Sheridan if the military control was still necessary. Sheridan replied that it was not, and at 6:00 P.M. on October 23, the civil authorities resumed control. The troops left for their stations on the following day and the volunteer regiment was disbanded.

The troops were no sooner gone than a feeling of uneasiness and turbulence asserted itself in certain quarters. A committee of prominent citizens requested Sheridan to order the return of four companies of infantry to the city which was done on the authority of General Sherman at Washington. The troops remained until after the first of the year, in spite of the arguments and protestations of Governor Palmer and the state legislature. Throughout the period of military control, serious crimes were few and far between. It was, in fact, the breathing spell that the city needed to recover its courage and confidence.[81]

The waterworks being disabled, the city was without water but work was started immediately on putting the engines and

[81] Andreas, *History of Chicago,* II: 775-80; Sheahan and Upton, *Great Conflagration,* 186-91.

pumps into working order. This work was done so promptly that on October 17 one engine was pumping water into the mains and by November 30, all the pumps were working at full capacity.

The temporary committee having done well its work of initiating the organization of order and relief, on October 13 it turned its task over to the Chicago Relief and Aid Society, a permanent organization sponsored by public-spirited citizens. The Society at once set about distributing the food and clothing and expending the funds which were now pouring into the city in large amounts, and of getting the homeless under shelter before the cold weather came. By November 7, the Society had constructed 4,000 two-room, frame cottages, sixteen by twenty-five feet in size, and expected to build 7,000 more soon. Fortunately the weather continued mild throughout the fall and winter. About $4,200,000 was received from all sources during the first three months and expended upon relief. A total of about $5,000,000 was subscribed.[82] So well was this work done that with the assistance of those who had not been burned out, no one was without food or shelter during the winter of 1871-1872. It was in this way that hope and courage were revived in the stricken city.

There were many people in the city and throughout the country, who said that Chicago was through, that it could never be rebuilt as the losses were too great. There was good reason for this belief. One-third of the property of the city—about $200,000,000 in value—had been wiped out. On this about $88,000,000 in insurance had been carried, of which only $45,000,000 to $50,000,000 was paid. Out of a total of about 250 fire insurance companies doing business in the city, about 70 suspended payment and failed completely. A few paid losses in full, others made partial payments, some paying as little as three to eight cents on the dollar.

Thousands of men were ruined completely and many never recouped their losses or regained the positions they held before the

[82] Colbert and Chamberlain, *Chicago and the Great Conflagration,* 431; Andreas, *History of Chicago,* III: 57.

fire, but there was throughout the city the feeling that bad as the situation was, it was not hopeless. Before the ruins had cooled, men were looking them over to see what could be salvaged, or as one expressed it, "to see if the bricks were cool enough to start rebuilding." In the next few years practically all traces of the fire were obliterated and the city was rebuilt in a manner more splendid than ever. Chicago had proved that it was not only the wonder city of the age, but the miracle city as well.

PART III. COMMENTARY

GENERAL REMARKS

The first reaction of the people of Chicago to the fire was one of fright and dismay. They regarded it as the greatest calamity that could have happened to them, as did the world in general, but as it receded into the background and they regained their composure and set about repairing the damage done, many of them decided that the fire was a good thing for the city because it wiped out undesirable districts and compelled the erection of better buildings. It did destroy certain bad sections of the city, but not all of them. To have this done by a fire which also rubbed out the best and most valuable sections, and at the same time destroyed 200 lives, as well as records which could not be replaced, was certainly a costly way of achieving that objective.

THE ORIGIN OF THE FIRE

The first question asked about a fire is: "How did it happen?" In the case of a large fire there usually is more than one answer. The Chicago Fire was no exception to this rule. It was not very long after it had started before its origin was being charged to: (1) incendiaries; (2) boys smoking in the O'Leary barn; (3) spontaneous combustion of the hay in the O'Leary

TIMES EXTRA!

The Doomed City

The Conflagration Still Raging Furiously in the Northwestern Divisions.

Riotous Demonstrations on the Part of the Populace.

The Work of Pillage only Restrained by the Military.

The Police Department Disorganized.

Provisions Arriving from All Quarters by Hundreds of Tons.

From the Times' special correspondent.

CHICAGO, October 10—10 A M The fire is still raging in the northwest portion of the city, about four miles from the telegraph office, which is located on the corner Sixteenth and State streets. Reports are wild and contradictory There is no doubt it is burning at a serious rate There was a rain, commenced at midnight but it did not last long

It is now cold Crowds are now roaming the streets and are making turbulent demonstrations taking possession of whatever they choose There is no lack of food flowing in from all directions Tell St Louis people to send nothing unless cooked, and addressed to the mayor All else is thrown away TITUS.

CHICAGO, October 10—10 A M

To Colonel R C Clowry.

The fire is all out on the South side. Think it is still raging on the North, about four miles from here—Sixteenth and State streets—though we can get no reliable information.

We had a heavy rain last night Everything is in the wildest confusion

It is almost impossible to find anybody to deliver messages to

ANSON STAGER,
Sup't Telegraph Co

ANOTHER REPORT

CHICAGO, October 10 A M - The crowd is troublesome in places, taking possession of houses and seriously alarming the inmates.

The reports are that the fire is still raging in the northwest back of the stock yards.

I have separated from the St Louis delegation, and am roaming about on my own hook, but can get no reliable reports There are but few military to be seen.

Trains are constantly arriving and departing with such as can get away They cannot get near the city and it is impossible to get drays to convey food to those in need

It is dumped from the railroad cars on the sides of the track, and an immense crowd are around. A great deal is wasted. No use to send anything not cooked. Hundreds of barrels of flour with heads out; no account: crackers best thing to send

TITUS.

THE INSURANCE COMPANIES.

The Probable Suspension of Numerous Eastern Companies.

The Leading Companies of Hartford Resolve to Pay Every Dollar.

NEW YORK, October 10—The excitement over the great fire continues intense

Many insurance companies will doubtless be compelled to suspend temporarily, in order to ascertain the amount of their liabilities.

HARTFORD, October 9.—The fire insurance companies have not yet estimated their losses, but they will doubtless aggregate several millions The officers of all leading companies vigorously assert their determination to pay every dollar as rapidly as possible.

The Monetary Excitement in New York.

NEW YORK, October 10—Dispatches constantly arriving from the doomed city have produced an unparalleled excitement on Wall street

Remarks are publicly made that the event is the signal for the bursting of one of the most stupendous bubbles the world had ever known, and that a panic was perhaps imminent

Jay Cooke & Co think it the most terrible calamity that has ever happened in this country, excepting only the civil war.

The heavy[illegible]est houses are doing everything possible to prevent any panic by the circulation of exaggerated reports. The leading bankers think it should be the first duty to help Chicago to make her losses as light as possible, and a movement is becoming general in this direction.

Notice to Citizens.

ST LOUIS, October 10—11 A. M.

All the committees are in session at Merchants' exchange. No news from St. Louis delegation as yet.

Over $20,000 paid in this morning. Let subscribers report as soon as possible.

AN EARLY NEWSPAPER ACCOUNT OF THE FIRE

barn; (4) neighbors visiting the O'Leary barn with a lighted kerosene lamp to get some milk for making milk punch or an oyster stew; (5) and Mrs. Catherine O'Leary's visiting her barn with a lighted kerosene lamp, possibly to milk a cow or to attend an ailing one.[83]

As for the fire being the work of incendiaries, no information worthy of belief has been uncovered to this day proving that this was the case, but there were stories and rumors to the effect that the city was fired by a secret terrorist organization, an offshoot of the Paris Commune of 1871, which intended to destroy not only Chicago, but cities all over the world, in the interest of social justice. It is of course possible that some pyromaniac did in the course of the fire touch off additional fires, but the conflagration was so fierce and on so large a scale as to surfeit any such persons' wild desires completely. There were flames enough from October 8 to 10 to throw such a mind into a stupor of fear.

As for the story of boys' smoking in the barn, it must be remembered that the fire started after dark, at about 8:30 P.M. It is not likely that boys would take the trouble to enter a barn after dark to smoke when they could do so just as well in the alley or behind one of the high fences, without fear of detection. In the absence of positive evidence to the contrary this theory can be rejected.

As to the possibility of spontaneous combustion of hay in the upper story of the barn, the hay was fresh, dry and small in amount, it had been in the barn for only a few hours before the fire started, and the day had been unusually dry and warm. The barn was loosely built and the long dry spell had tended to make it even looser and leakier. The doors and windows were open a good part of the day and the wind was strong. There was enough circulation of air throughout the structure to make a dust explosion impossible. This suggested cause of the fire can therefore be rejected without further comment.

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[83] Frank Luzerne, *The Lost City . . . Chicago, as it was, and as it is* (New York, 1872), 185-96; Andreas, *History of Chicago,* II: 701.

Now let us look at the idea that some of the neighbors went to the barn for milk. This story has been generally accepted. It is told as follows:

> Finally we hired an Irish cook. . . . It seems she lived in the vicinity of the O'Leary house, and knew the O'Learys. She also had a family of friends living near the O'Learys. She made the statement to me that a lot of young people were having a dance the evening the fire started. They wanted to make a little punch but were out of milk, and some one suggested that they go over and milk Mrs. O'Leary's cow. They picked up a glass lamp which was in this house, and went to the shed, and, while attempting to milk the cow, the lamp was kicked over, and they fled.

There was a party in the McLaughlin home, immediately in front of the O'Leary house, where some young people were honoring the arrival of a cousin from Ireland. All were in the house when the fire broke out. This party indulged in beer, but had no whiskey or milk punch on hand. If milk was needed for either milk punch or oyster stew, it is likely that Mrs. O'Leary was asked to get it. If any one of the McLaughlin family or of their guests was in the barn when the fire started, he or she was there without Mrs. O'Leary's permission. This applies to the other neighbors as well. It is not reasonable to suppose that Mrs. O'Leary permitted any strange person to milk any of her cows, especially after dark. Further, Mrs. McLaughlin indignantly denied that she or any of her guests had been in the barn on that Sunday night, and she resented strongly any implication to that effect.[84] This suggested cause for the origin of the fire can also be rejected in the absence of positive evidence.

Now let us consider the last suggested cause of the fire. It is certain that someone was in the O'Leary barn when the fire started and that that person was directly or indirectly responsible for the fire. That person, probably Mrs. O'Leary, took a kerosene lamp into the barn. Whether it was lighted when it was

[84] Andreas, *History of Chicago*, II: 708-709.

taken to the barn or lighted afterward cannot be ascertained. The lighted lamp was placed on the floor near a cow. The cow became frisky and kicked it over and the barn took fire from the flaming wick and burning oil. The fire had not been burning very long before that story was being passed around the city and this was before anyone had any idea that the city was going to be destroyed. It has a basis of fact, and it is true if the words of Robert S. Critchell, fire insurance man of Chicago can be accepted. He stated:

> On the following evening, about eight o'clock, Sunday night, the far-famed and historical lady, known as Mrs. O'Leary, went out into her barn to milk her cow to get some milk to make milk punch with; the cow kicked over the lamp, set the barn afire and the result was the great Chicago conflagration of 1871. This story of the origin of that fire is strictly true. I never saw the cow, but I did interview the old lady and was informed by her in a rather ungracious way that the story was true.[85]

This story is confirmed by that of Jacob J. Schaller, a retired business man living in Oak Park, Illinois, who stated:

> At the time of the fire he [Schaller] was nine years old and lived with his family on the north side of De Koven Street, about a block east of the O'Leary premises, that he used to deliver milk for Mrs. O'Leary in the afternoon and early evenings. On the evening of Sunday, October 8, he took the usual fifteen pints to her customers and then went home and to bed. About a quarter to nine, his mother waked him and told him to dress. She said there was a fire down on De Koven Street. He put on his shirt and pants and ran barefooted to the fire. He returned and told his father that it was Mrs. O'Leary's cow shed. . . . He spent the night with his family at a cousin's place on Maxwell Street next to the quarters of the Little Giant. The next morning he went to the O'Leary place all alone. He saw Mrs. O'Leary. She was very much distressed over what had happened and because of the loss of her cow. She placed her arm around his

[85] Critchell, *Recollections,* 81; Goodspeed, *History of the Great Fires,* 156.

O'Leary Premises After the Fire

shoulders. He asked her: "How did the fire start?" She answered: "that she had company the night before and she wanted some milk to make Tom and Jerry for her friends, she took her lantern and went to the barn to get some. The daily supply had been sold, he had delivered it that evening. She started to milk the cow and had gotten about a half pint in the bucket, when the cow becoming resentful at being milked a second time on the same night, raised up her right hind leg and let go, giving a light kick which hit the lantern and knocked it over and it set fire to the barn." I then went home and told my folks.[86]

This story is confirmed in its main points by another told while the fire was still burning, Mrs. O'Leary admitting then that the story was true. She said that she went to the barn to look after an ailing cow. She put some feed into the bin. The cow became skittish, kicked over the lamp by accident, it exploded and set fire to the hay and the barn. She was wild over the loss of her animals and hurled maledictions on the cow while the crowd of police, spectators and reporters was around her front yard during the fire.[87]

Another story is as follows:

On the morning of the fire she [Mrs. O'Leary] was found sitting on the front steps of her own house. Her attenuated form was bent forward, her head resting on her hands. She was rocking to and fro, moaning and groaning, and crying aloud after the manner of her country-women when in great trouble. At first she refused to speak one word about the fire, but only screamed at the top of her voice, "My poor cow; my poor cow. She is gone, and I have nothing left in the world." Finally she was induced to talk, and this is what she said: It had been her regular nightly habit to visit the stable and see if her cow was all right. On Sunday night, about half-past nine o'clock, she took a lamp in her hands, and went out to look at her pet. Then she took a notion the cow must have some salt, and she set down the lamp and went in the house for some. In a moment the cow

[86] Musham, Notes on the Chicago Fire.
[87] *Lakeside Memorial of the Burning of Chicago*, 22.

had accidently kicked over the lamp, an explosion followed, and in an instant the structure was enveloped in flame.[88]

On another occasion, when questioned about the truth of the story, she did not deny it.[89]

The first story in the Chicago press, reported in the *Evening Journal* of October 9, was as follows: "The fire broke out on the corner of De Koven and Twelfth streets about 9 o'clock on Sunday evening, being caused by a cow kicking over a lamp in a stable in which a woman was milking a cow."

Here are four statements said to have been made by Mrs. O'Leary, and on four separate occasions, and two others supporting them. The Critchell and Schaller statements confirm each other on the main points except in one particular. Critchell says that she took a lamp to the barn while Schaller says that it was a lantern. All four agree on the main point: That the fire was started when a cow belonging to Mrs. O'Leary kicked over a lighted lamp or lantern in her barn on the evening of October 8, at about the time specified, and that she was present when it happened. This point is further confirmed by her failure to deny its truth when questioned about it on other occasions and by the statement in the *Journal,* which while not mentioning her name is very plain as to the cause of the fire.

These stories disagree in several particulars. They all overlook the fact that she had five cows instead of one, and a calf and a horse. Three of the stories were told by Mrs. O'Leary while the fire was still burning and the other at some time afterward. The people to whom these statements were made had no wish to put the blame on Mrs. O'Leary. They were simply seeking to determine the cause of the fire. There can be but one thing to do relative to the main point and that is to accept it as being true.

For whom was Mrs. O'Leary milking a cow after regular milking hours on that fateful evening? She may have been doing it for herself. If she had a customer—and it is entirely possible

[88] Goodspeed, *History of the Great Fires,* 156-57.
[89] Higginson Papers.

that she had, as there was a party at the McLaughlins, and there may have been other parties in the neighborhood—his or her name cannot be determined from the information at hand. It is entirely possible that someone did need milk for a milk punch or an oyster stew, and since she was a milk dealer it was but natural for that person to apply to her. As for other reasons for her being in the barn it is possible that a cow was ailing or it may have been her custom to look over the barn every night.

There was a lamp in the barn that night. The remains of one were seen by Phillip Sharkey in the ruins of the barn on the morning of October 9, and by Joseph Dushek of 153 De Koven Street, just after the fire. The chimney and globe were missing. Further, on Tuesday morning, a broken lower part of a small glass lamp was found under a broken plank of the floor by S. H. Kimball, which may have been part of the lamp found by Dushek.[90] No remains of any other kind of a lamp or lantern were found in the ruins though they were well examined by the curious and souvenir hunting public. It is probable that the lamp seen was that taken by Mrs. O'Leary to the barn. If her lamp had a globe it would have been natural for her to remove it when she left the house.

In spite of all this, within five days after the fire, the O'Learys were saying that they had nothing to do with causing the fire. On October 15, Michael McDermott, notary public and city surveyor, went to their house and took their affidavits which they signed with their marks. According to this document:

> Patrick O'Leary and Catharine, his wife . . . testify that . . . they own the lot and house in which they live; they had five cows, a horse and wagon, on all of which they had not one cent of insurance. She milked her cows at 4:30 P.M. and 5:00 A.M. as Mrs. O'Leary peddled her milk. Mrs. O'Leary fed the horse beside the fence at 7:00 P.M. and then

[90] Andreas, *History of Chicago,* II: 714-15; McIlvaine, ed., *Reminiscences of Chicago During the Great Fire,* xvii-xviii; Musham, Notes on the Chicago Fire.

put him in the barn. She had no lighted lamp in the house or barn that evening.

Patrick O'Leary testifies that he was not in the barn during that day or night; left the feeding of the cows and horse to his wife and daughter; that both were in bed when awakened by Dennis Rogan . . . that they have lost their barn, cows, horse and wagon.

In support of these statements, Dennis Sullivan ("Peg Leg") swore:

He was at Patrick O'Leary's house . . . on Sunday night, the 8th of October, 1871, from about 8:30 to 9 o'clock at night, during which time Mr. O'Leary and wife were in bed; that he went a few lots east of O'Leary's on the opposite side of De Koven Street, until about half-past nine o'clock, when he saw the fire. He ran across the street, and cried, "Fire, fire," and went into O'Leary's barn, where he found the hay in the loft on fire. He attempted to cut loose the horse and cows, but failed to save anything but a half-burned calf. He then came to O'Learys and found them out of bed. Dennis Rogan alarmed them during his time at the barn.

At the official investigation by the Board of Police which began on November 23 and lasted two weeks, Mrs. O'Leary testified. She declared that:

She and her family—her husband and five children—were in bed, *but not asleep,* on that Sunday night. They knew nothing of the fire until Mr. Sullivan, a drayman, who lives on the south side of De Koven Street *awoke* [Andreas notes that "the discrepancy in this statement is not commented on by the commissioners"] them, and said their barn was on fire. She . . . saw that it could not be saved. She became almost crazy on account of losing all her property—barn, wagons, harness, six cows and a horse—and was very much excited. There were three barns—two besides her own—on fire at the same time. . . . She understood that [the McLaughlin family] were having a "social time" on that Sunday night; that they had an oyster supper; and a Mrs. White had told her that one of that family went into the barn to milk one of the cows. She herself had no knowledge of it, and could not say whether it was true or not. . . .

Patrick O'Leary swore that his wife was in bed by eight o'clock, and he followed her about half an hour later. He was asleep when Sullivan roused him.[91]

At the official investigation, O'Leary stated that the door opening on the alley and that on the south side of the barn were open and that the latter was nailed back and could not be shut. One of the doors at least—most likely that opening on the alley—must have been a double door large enough to admit a wagon. If these doors were open why were not some of the animals other than the calf saved? There is no evidence that they were saved but it is possible since witnesses state that only one cow was found on the barn floor the next morning.

> Dennis Rogan, of No. 112 De Koven Street testified that he was at the O'Leary house about half past eight Sunday evening. Mr. and Mrs. O'Leary were in bed. Rogan inquired why they had gone to bed so early and Mrs. O'Leary replied that it was because she had a "sore foot." Rogan went home, and to bed. Some time after nine o'clock he heard a neighbor say that the O'Leary barn was on fire, and ran there. He tried to save a wagon that was in the barn, but could not. The heat drove him away. There was company at the McLaughlin's, and one was a "fiddler," and Rogan heard music there at the time of the fire.

Mrs. McLaughlin testified that no one of her party went to the barn that night to get milk for milk punch.[92]

These statements, and those sworn to before Notary McDermott, are all in the nature of an attempt to prove an alibi, and in them are discrepancies. They state that Mrs. O'Leary could not have been in the barn when the fire started because she was in bed. The statement sworn to before Notary McDermott states that Rogan waked the O'Learys up, but that made before the Board of Police declares that Sullivan did, and Rogan does not say that he waked them at all. If the O'Learys were in bed and

[91] Andreas, *History of Chicago*, II: 708-709.

[92] *Chicago Tribune*, Nov. 26, 1871; Andreas, *History of Chicago*, II: 709.

asleep at 8:30 P.M. and for the next half hour, they were certainly very good sleepers to sleep through a party, with fiddling and dancing going on within a few feet of them, and through all the noise and excitement attending the discovery of the burning of their barn. The burning barn was seen by the neighborhood as early at 8:40 P.M. and had even then attracted the attention of a number of people.

Why did Mrs. O'Leary deny the statements she made during and soon after the fire? The reasons are not hard to find. Soon after the fire had moved off to the northeast leaving the O'Leary's houses unburned, the usual crowd of curiosity seekers, souvenir hunters and idlers gathered about the O'Leary houses. It was soon rumored through this crowd that the fire was caused by one of Mrs. O'Leary's cows kicking over the lamp while she was milking and that the flame from the lamp set off the barn. From this crowd, the story spread throughout the city.

Mrs. O'Leary was naturally distraught at the loss of her cows, horse and wagon, and appalled at the destruction her carelessness had brought about. She was afraid of the crowd and was in great fear of being arrested as an incendiary.[93] There had recently been much talk in the city about incendiaries and what would happen to them if they were caught. Walking around her house she could see in all directions except to the south the great desolation that her frisky cow had brought. She retired to her house, and locked herself in. Even there she could not get away from the fire, for its glare lighted up the rooms. From the rear window of the cottage, she could see one of the most awesome spectacles ever beheld by the eyes of man, in the creation of which one of her cows had played the principal part. Looking north and northeast, she could see the ever-widening wave of fire rolling relentlessly over the city. She must have seen the tremendous fire at Bateham's mills blazing high above the flames of the smaller houses. With the coming of daylight on Monday, she could see the vast clouds of smoke that marked the destruction of

[93] Blanchard, *Discovery of the Northwest,* 683-84.

the business district and the North Side. The flat prairie on which the city had been built became increasingly visible before her tired eyes as the day advanced. When night fell she could see the flames still burning along Lincoln Park, about four miles from her home.

The reaction of the public to Mrs. O'Leary was anything but favorable. Among the 92,000 people were many who had lost all they had, and undoubtedly some were in a resentful state of mind toward the person who was said to have caused their losses. Can it be doubted that she and her husband were the recipients of many hard remarks and threats to their safety? She feared mob violence, which soon showed itself in the city. Then too there was the loud demand that the fire be thoroughly investigated and that those responsible for it be punished. This would bring to Mrs. O'Leary's mind the fear that she would have to answer to the law for having caused it. She was further afraid that she would be asked to pay for the losses. Naturally the O'Learys and their friends closed up like clams when questioned about it.

The Chicago Fire was the outstanding event of the times and not many days after it a flood of pamphlets, books, photographs and highly colored lithographs began to pour from the presses. Lecturers traveled up and down the land. Tragic as it was, the fire had its lighter sides and one of them was Mrs. O'Leary and her cow. Humor was resorted to, and some of it rather bitter. Writers who had not taken the trouble to inform themselves referred to her in the most uncomplimentary and derogatory terms. It must also be remembered that in those days there was a strong prejudice against the immigrant part of the population, which had been stirred up by the Know Nothing or Nativist movement of the fifties and which had not as yet died down. There is further good reason to believe that many of the Irish people in the city regarded the fire as a reflection upon all of them.

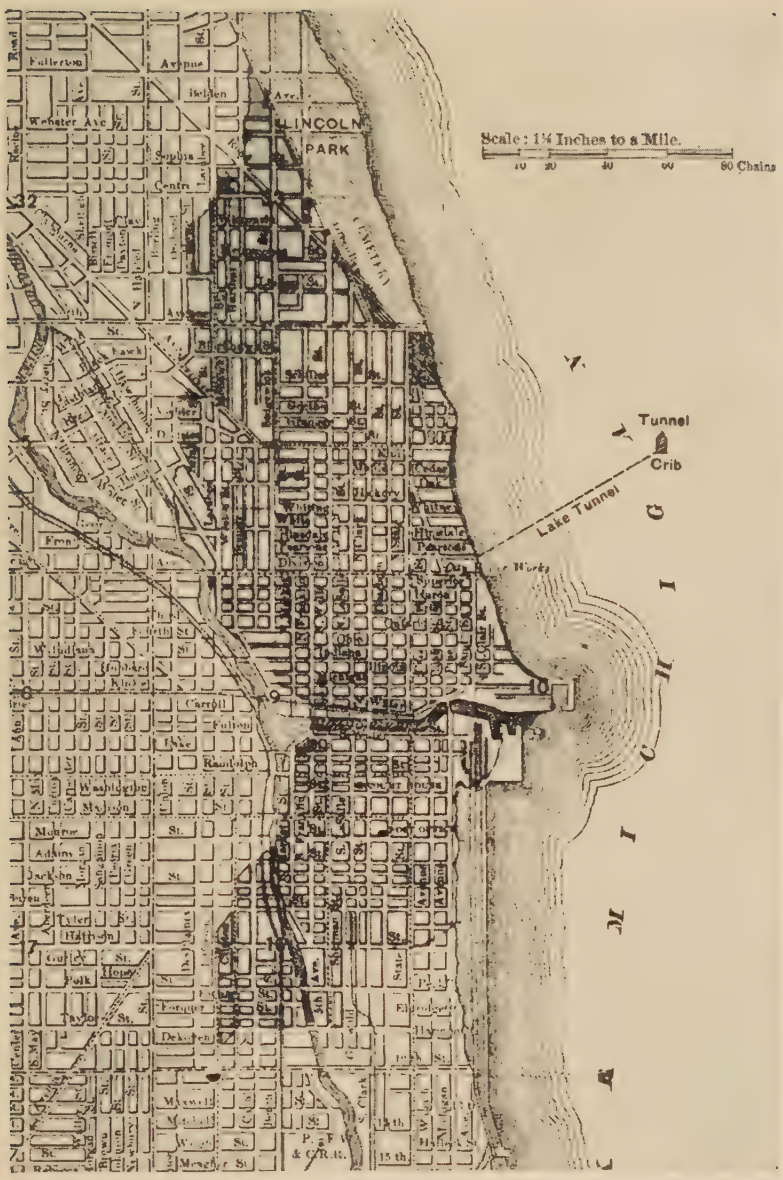
Mrs. O'Leary by the kick of her cow became a personage, particularly in Chicago. She was most likely annoyed by curiosity seekers and amateur investigators. Wherever she went she would

be received as "the Mrs. O'Leary who caused the Chicago Fire," if not openly, then in whispers. As the years passed she and her family became very reticent about it, and whenever any reference was made to it, she denied that she had anything to do with starting the fire. Be this as it may, when all the evidence in the case is fairly considered, there can be but one conclusion and that is: That the Great Chicago Fire of October 8-10, 1871 was started in the barn of Mr. and Mrs. Patrick O'Leary, 137 De Koven Street, by one of their cows kicking over a lighted kerosene lamp between 8:30 and 9:00 P.M. on Sunday, October 8; that it was brought about by an accident; and that Mrs. O'Leary was in the barn at the time.

THE ALARM FOR THE FIRE

The first alarm for the fire was turned in on Box 296 by Bruno Goll at the request of William Lee who ran into the drugstore at the corner of 12th and Canal streets at about 9:05 P.M. According to operator Brown, on duty at the central fire alarm telegraph office in the Courthouse, this alarm did not register there. At about 9:21 P.M. the watchman of the Little Giant Company No. 6 noticed the fire and gave the alarm to the company. As Foreman Musham took his company out to the fire an alarm was sounding on the gong in the engine house. Similarly Foreman Rau, of Protection Hook and Ladder Company No. 2, whose watchman had also given them a still alarm, heard the gong strike Box 342 as the company started out to answer the call. This would mean that the alarm for Box 342 must have been sounded from the central office by Operator Brown about a minute or two later. The alarm was received by Marshal Williams and some of the companies, according to some of their members, at the following times: 9:15 P.M., Marshal Williams; 9:20 P.M., Engineer Coleman, Chicago No. 5; 9:25 P.M., Foreman Swenie, Fred Gund No. 14; 9:30 P.M., Foreman Meyers, Tempest Hose No. 1; 9:16 P.M., Foreman Musham, Little Giant No. 6.[94]

[91] Andreas, *History of Chicago,* II: 711-13.



THE BURNED DISTRICT

Allowing for differences in watches and averaging the times given, Box 342 was struck at the Central Office at 9:21 P.M. instead of 9:32 P.M. as stated by Operator Brown. More likely it was still earlier, since both Watchman Schaffer and Operator Brown stated that they first noticed the fire soon after 9:00 P.M., and watched it increase in brightness in the moments following. This agrees more with the general situation at the O'Leary lot.

Assuming that the fire started between 8:30 and 8:45, the fire was burning from forty-seven to sixty-two minutes, according to Brown, while it attracted the attention of the whole neighborhood, without an alarm being given. Why did such a situation occur? The first thing that Mrs. O'Leary did, after the lamp was overturned, was to scream. Then most likely she called her husband and attempted to put out the fire. When she saw that the fire was too much for her she would naturally next try to save the cows and the horse. The neighbors, seeing the fire by this time, probably attempted to help her. There were two alarm boxes nearby: 295 at Desplaines and Taylor streets, one block north and one and a half west of the O'Leary barn, and 296 at Goll's drug store at 12th and Canal streets, one and a half blocks east and three south of the same place. Apparently no one thought of turning in alarms on either of them until Lee ran into Goll's store and asked Goll to do so.

Ten minutes later, another man also ran into Goll's store and told him that the fire was spreading and Goll turned in another alarm. Just before this time, the Little Giant had crossed Twelfth Street on its way to the fire. It is likely that other boxes were pulled throughout the neighborhood by various citizens, yet according to Superintendent E. B. Chandler of the fire alarm telegraph none of these alarms registered at the central office and Brown sounded the first alarm for Box 342 at Canalport Avenue and Halsted Street, one mile to the south of O'Leary's place, at 9:32 P.M. If Chandler is correct in his statement, then his fire alarm system was not working when Goll turned in his alarms on Box 296 or Goll did not properly operate the box. The latter does

not appear likely, because Chandler had stated "that one pull at a hook turned in the alarm with unerring accuracy." The work of replacing the old crank boxes had been carried out in 1871 just previous to the fire, but it is possible that Box 296 had not yet been converted to the new system. That could easily account for the failure of the alarm as the crank boxes were notoriously unreliable. Whatever type of alarm Box 296 may have been at this time, Goll's two alarms failed to register at the central office. Therefore something must have been wrong with it or with the wires connecting it with the Courthouse. These passed over the roofs of the houses and it is possible that the light wind had swung them up against some wall, or against other wires, temporarily interrupting the circuit. It was working later as an alarm was received from it about 9:31 P.M.

Why was it that the fire was not seen by some watchman in the towers of the companies earlier than about 9:20 P.M.? There are two possible reasons for this. The first is that the regulations did not require them to go to their posts before 9:30 P.M. However, the foremen usually sent them there some minutes before that time. Accordingly Watchman Lauf of the Little Giant Company went to his post about 9:20 P.M., and on reaching it immediately saw the fire and reported it to Foreman Musham without delay. The second reason is that the O'Leary barn was a low structure, not easily seen from the tower 1,000 feet to the south, with other buildings in between.

The second story of the barn was filled with hay, and as hay burns with a heavy voluminous smoke the light of the fire was obscured. Neither could the smoke have been smelled as the light southwest wind blew it away to the north. Time elapsed before the fire burned through the roof but when it did the barn appeared to explode and Lauf lost no time in reporting it when he saw it over the intervening housetops. Schaffer and other watchmen also saw it about this time.

Why did Schaffer make such a bad error in locating the fire near Box 342 instead of Boxes 296 or 295? The answer is that

these boxes and the fire were almost in a direct line from the Courthouse tower as were the burning coal piles ignited by the fire of Saturday night. On the south side of Washington Street across from the Courthouse was the Chamber of Commerce, a building almost as high as the tower and south of it for some blocks were a number of other tall buildings. The night was dark as there was no moon until after midnight. It was early fall and the air was full of autumn haze which was thickened by smoke from the forest and prairie fires and the smoke from the burning coal piles, all of which blurred the outlines of the landmarks which Schaffer would use in fixing the location of any fire. It is very difficult to make correct estimates of distances over housetops under the best conditions, but when confronted with such conditions as Schaffer was, it was almost an impossibility, even though he did have a spyglass. It must be remarked, however, that an error of a mile in a distance of a mile and an eighth is too large, even under difficult conditions. Schaffer did see his mistake and called it to Operator Brown's attention and told him to strike Box 319, at the Police Station at Twelfth and Johnson streets, a short distance from the fire. Brown refused to do so, giving as his reasons that it would confuse the engine companies and that they would pass the fire on their way to Box 342. Brown must have known that of the companies scheduled to answer a first alarm from Box 342, only Chicago Engine Company No. 5, Protection Hook and Ladder Company No. 2, America Hose Company No. 2, and Tempest Hose Company No. 1, would pass the fire on their way to Box 342 since their quarters were north of the fire, and that engine companies Little Giant No. 6, Waubansia No. 2, and Illinois No. 15 were all to the south and west of the actual fire.

As a result of Brown's stupidity, of the four engine companies —Little Giant No. 6, Chicago No. 5, Rice No. 10 and Williams No. 17—which would have answered a first alarm from either Box 295 or 296, the correct boxes for the fire, only the first two responded to the first alarm. If the correct box had been struck these companies would have all been at the fire within five to ten

minutes and would have put it out in short order. As it was, the Little Giant— and a little giant it turned out to be—worked all alone for about twenty minutes before another engine arrived ready for work.

From all this it can be concluded: That no attempt was made to turn in an alarm before 9:05 P.M.—about twenty-five minutes after the fire started, assuming that it began at 8:40 P.M.; that the first alarm was a still alarm given by Watchman Lauf in the tower of the Little Giant Engine Company No. 6, at 9:20 P.M., allowing one minute for transmission from him to Foreman Musham; that Operator Brown and Watchman Schaffer erred in striking Box 342 instead of Box 295 or 296, the correct ones for the fire; that Box 342 was struck by Operator Brown at 9:21 P.M. instead of at 9:32 P.M.; that Operator Brown erred still more in failing to correct his mistake, especially after Watchman Schaffer had called his attention to it; that Box 296 was pulled by Bruno Goll before Operator Brown struck Box 342; that since Box 296 did not register at the central office of the fire alarm telegraph, the fire alarm system either did not work or the alarm was not properly turned in by Goll; and that the failure of the O'Learys and their neighbors to turn in an alarm promptly on Boxes 295 and 296, and the failure of Operator Brown and Watchman Schaffer to locate the fire accurately were responsible for its spreading to other barns, sheds and houses in the alley behind the O'Leary house.

THE FIRE

It is apparent from this study that Chicago was not destroyed by one great fire spreading fanwise from the O'Leary barn, the point of origin, but by several fires, each separate and distinct. The fires and the fire centers were: (1) *O'Leary Fire,* started by a cow kicking over a lamp in the O'Leary barn between 8:30 and 8:45 P.M.; (2) *Bateham's Mills Fire,* started from fire in Roelle furniture factory, which had spread from St. Paul's

Courtesy of Harlow M. Church

Ruins of a Bridge Across the Chicago River

Church, ignited at 10:00 P.M. by a brand from the O'Leary Fire; (3) *Parmelee's Stables Fire,* started at 11:30 P.M. by a brand from the Bateham's Mills Fire; (4) *Gas Works Fire,* started at 12:00 midnight, by a brand from the Bateham's Mills Fire and soon coalesced with (5) *Conley's Patch Fire,* started at 12:20 A.M. by a brand from the Bateham's Mills Fire; (6) *Courthouse Fire,* started at 1:30 A.M. by a brand from Conley's Patch Fire and soon coalesced with it; (7) *Wright's Stables Fire,* started at 2:30 A.M. by a brand from Conley's Patch Fire; (8) *Polk Street Fire,* started at 2:30 A.M. from O'Leary Fire; (9) *Northwestern Elevator Fire,* started at 7:00 A.M., October 9, by brands from Conley's Patch and Courthouse fires; (10) *Galena Elevator Fire,* started at 7:00 A.M. by brands from Conley's Patch Fire.

These fire centers did not enlarge themselves entirely by flame contact—not even the O'Leary Fire. Soon after the latter started, "the wind or draft commenced to blow strongly," and small pieces of burning materials were sucked up and dropped on sheds, barns and piles of shavings. These, taking fire, formed the "nest of fire" between De Koven and Taylor streets which enlarged itself by flame contact and showers of sparks until it covered the two blocks between De Koven and Forquer streets. This fire was under control at about 10:00 P.M. It was the source of the brand which set off St. Paul's Church four blocks to the north.

It is plain from the many accounts of the fires which formed these fire centers that with the exception of the O'Leary Fire, they were set off by brands which in some cases were large planks. The brands were carried northeast and east of northeast for distances of from one-quarter to three-eighths of a mile, a feat far beyond the power of the wind which was blowing from the south and southwest on the night of October 8, and morning of October 9. There was no cyclone or tornado blowing during the hours the fire was burning. The highest wind observed on the night of October 8-9 was one blowing 30 miles an hour from the east directly towards the fire. This observation was made at a point

in front of the fire and only 40 yards from it. At a point a half-mile to the northeast of the fire, the wind was blowing 18 miles per hour. An 18 mile wind, according to the Beaufort scale, is a moderate breeze which will only lift dust and loose paper and sway small trees in leaf. It cannot lift planks, either large or small. Lifting and carrying a large plank requires that a "whole gale" be blowing, and it must have a velocity of 55 miles an hour or more. Such a wind is a rarity in Chicago and certainly one was not blowing on the night of October 8-9, there or elsewhere in the Middle West. Positive proof that such was the case is found on the photographs of the unburned parts of the city taken immediately after the fire. The buildings, especially the lightly constructed dwellings, along the limits of the burned district show none of the damage that such a wind would cause.

It is necessary to look elsewhere to determine why and how these large burning brands were lifted from fires, moved forward, and dropped at distances up to three-eighths of a mile. The answer can be found in what may be called "convection whirls," which are formed and behave according to the principles of thermodynamics and meterology.[95]

Convection is the term used to describe the heating and cooling of a gas or liquid by means of which a continuous circulation is set up in it. It is a gravitational phenomena. The heated part of the medium becomes lighter, while the unheated part remains the same weight. The cooler, being heavier, sinks, forcing the heated mass upward and circulation is set up which continues as long as the heating lasts.

Now the sun does not heat the atmosphere and the surface of the earth equally in all places. The air is also heated by radiation of heat from the surface. An extensive layer of warm light air cannot all arise at the same time, but must rise or settle in

[95] William J. Humphreys, *Physics of the Air* (Philadelphia, 1920), 97, 143-47, 207-11; Gayle Pickwell, *Weather* (Los Angeles, 1937), 84, 86, 97; Ivan R. Tannehill, *Hurricanes* (Princeton, 1938), 21, 45, 52, 53, 83-84; Charles F. Talman, *The Realm of the Air* (Indianapolis, [c1931]), 161-63; E. E. Free and Travis Hoke, *Weather* (New York, 1928), 219-22.

local streams. The rising streams begin to lose their heat to the cooler descending streams as soon as the air leaves the source of heat and diffusion with turbulence takes place. The phenomenon can be observed sometimes on a bright day by looking over a flat surface. The air near the surface shimmers and dances, causing an apparent displacement of objects seen through it.

It sometimes happens that the heated area is comparatively large and the temperature of the heated air is unusually high. In such cases the heated air rises in the form of a column which breaks through the surrounding colder atmosphere, and the latter, descending, rushes in toward the source of heat at an increasing rate forming a draught like that of a chimney. As the column rises it contracts in sections, a short distance above the source of the heat. Due to obstacles, such as irregularities on the earth's surface, the descending cold air seldom moves in to the source of heat in a direct line. It is usually deflected to one side or the other. Consequently, with air moving in from all sides, couples or pairs of opposing forces are set up on the sides of the column of ascending air and a whirl is developed in the rising column which turns at a high velocity. On flat plains or deserts, and even in cities, these "dust whirls" or "dust devils" pick up such loose materials as dust, straws and leaves. Their diameter is usually but a few feet. After they are formed they may remain almost stationary for some time. Moving off, they strike obstacles such as trees, walls or ascending slopes, and break up or dissolve, dropping the material they carry. When the source of heat is small the whirls formed are slight, but generally speaking the flatter and more barren the region, the hotter the surface and quieter the air, the more violent these dust devils become. They may be almost tornadic in their violence. They are common on deserts in the southwest, where they sometimes rise to a height of several hundred feet. If their progress is not too fast, they resemble slender chimneys. Dust whirls are not tornadoes as they originate on and are sustained by a supply of warm air from the ground while a tornado is generated and developed by conditions

in the clouds some thousands of feet above the earth.

If a mass of material is burning on a flat, open piece of ground, a circulation of the air is formed over and about the fire, but as much larger masses of air are involved, the cold air rushes in towards the fire along or near the ground from all sides. As it approaches the fire its velocity increases so that on reaching the column of air rising from the fire, it may be blowing at the rate of a strong gale. In this manner a large fire creates its own wind. The movement of air toward the fire may be so strong that it will neutralize by one-half a wind blowing over the fire at a velocity of twenty miles an hour, and this at a distance of a mile and a half. The incoming air, being deflected by the wind and obstacles such as trees, buildings and fences, on reaching the fire may cause the rising column of superheated air to revolve with sufficient velocity to lift up and toss about planks of considerable size.

No large fire burns at a steady rate. It pulsates, sending up large masses of flame and billows of smoke in a sort of rhythm. Between surges of the fire, the column of rising air may be broken and the upper parts of it may move off from the fire carrying large brands and masses of sparks. The temperature of the flames may be anywhere from 750 to 3,000 degrees Fahrenheit, and though that of the rising column is not known, it can be stated however that the air in it is superheated. It will keep ignited the burning material it carries and this tends to maintain the temperature of the column for a time. But as it moves away from the source of heat its temperature falls and it begins to break up, dropping its load. In its movement from the fire it usually strikes buildings and other obstacles and showers them with the burning material, enveloping them in flames almost instantaneously. This whirling, moving mass of fire and superheated air is a convection whirl which may properly be called a "fire whirl," or a "fire devil."

Unquestionably, in the Chicago Fire, fire devils were generated at critical moments. They carried burning brands, sparks and masses of fire forward for distances up to three-eighths of a mile. The destruction of the city can be said to have been brought

about by fire spilled progressively on it by these fire devils which started new fires far in advance of those from which they arose; these, assisted by showers of sparks and masses of superheated air, formed new centers of destruction, from which fire literally flowed in all directions, particularly to the north and northeast, which ceased only when there was nothing more to burn.

Another phenomenon which should be given consideration in connection with the spread of the fire is the possibility that the stream of fire which struck the shed near Polk Street on the east bank of the South Branch at about 1:00 A.M. was a funnel similar to those formed in tornadoes. The conditions at the time appear to have been favorable for such a formation. It is not likely that it was a single flame for no flames other than those which have streamed from volcanoes have ever been of such length.

There is no way of ascertaining just how high the atmosphere was disturbed by the fire, but it appears likely that at certain points of the fire the ascending masses of superheated air may have taken on the form of flues up which the draft may have carried large amounts of smoke, and sparks which soon became cinders, up to the higher reaches of the air whence they were borne away long distances before being dropped. Evidence that this may have been the case is given in the statement of C. N. Bear, seaman, who was making a voyage from New Orleans to New York at the time:

> "When we were off Cape Hatteras [about 800 miles from Chicago] at about noon, Oct. 10, the sky over the ship became overcast and suddenly there began falling large quantities of cinders. So black became the descending cloud that it seemed as if we would lose our bearings and meet with some disaster" . . . .
>
> There was no radio then, of course, and the passengers made up a pool, each making a wild guess as to the cause of the phenomenon. When the ship reached the Narrows a pilot came aboard bearing newspapers that reported Chicago was in ashes.[96]

[96] *Chicago Daily News,* Feb. 4, 1941.

Volcanic matter has been carried around the world by the currents of the higher levels and it is possible that the cinder cloud did come from Chicago or at least from one of the serious forest fires burning at the same time in Wisconsin and Michigan.

The fire was the most intense during the march of the northeast salient of the gas works and Conley's patch fire to the Courthouse. Here it had more substantial material to feed upon. The buildings were structures up to five stories in height which though built of stone, brick and iron offered no real obstacle to its rapid progress. When the Courthouse took fire, about a quarter-mile square of such structures was burning. Tremendous amounts of heat were set free which heated the air over the fire at times to temperatures possibly running as high as 3,000 degrees Fahrenheit. The upward movement of this superheated air caused a draft to blow into the fire from all directions with high velocities which at times may have reached that of a strong gale. Here if anywhere a fire cyclone would have been formed which as long as it lasted moved slowly on to the northeast, cutting the swath previously referred to, right through the heart of the business district. This however cannot be stated positively.

As the fire moved down Adams, Monroe and Madison streets the flames crossed and poured and swirled in on LaSalle, Clark and Dearborn as if impelled by some gigantic blow torch. The air currents behaved exactly as they would have done in a severe blizzard and it is not wrong to state that at many points the fire was a fire blizzard before whose blasts buildings seemed to melt away. Here and at many other places the temperatures were high enough to melt and burn iron, steel and copper and to calcine stone.

As to the depth of the zone of fire there is a lack of positive information upon which estimates can be based. On the West and North sides it is likely that from front to rear, one line of houses was smoking and about to take fire, a second burning fiercely, a third burning out, a fourth in which the ruins and ashes were smoldering, and in the rear a deep belt in which the ruins

were slowly cooling off. This zone of fire was probably from two to three blocks deep. In the business district, where the buildings were built of slightly more resistant materials, the fire burned more slowly and once it got away from the Courthouse it is not likely that the advancing wave was much over a block and a half deep. The heat was felt far out on the lake. So hot was the wind on October 9 that men working at Holland, Michigan, 100 miles to the northeast, were forced to take refuge behind hedges to escape the scorching gusts which passed over them at frequent intervals. As Holland had that very morning suffered from the same kind of a holocaust, they thought that the time had come "when the earth and all things therein would be burned up."[97]

The rate of advance of the fire varied. It roared through Conley's Patch at about 100 yards a minute or three and four-tenths miles per hour and this speed may have been equaled at some points on the North Side. The average advance from the O'Leary premises to Fullerton Avenue was one mile in six hours or about five yards a minute. The plan of the city facilitated this rapid advance, being laid out on the rectangular system with the streets generally running north and south and east and west. As the fire moved generally northeast it struck the blocks and buildings at an angle of about forty-five degrees and folded itself about them, first over and then around the two foremost sides and in some cases under them. Consequently they appeared actually to burst into flames.

The glare lighted up the lake and the prairie for long distances as if by day. At Des Plaines, twenty miles to the northwest and beyond, it was possible to read a newspaper by its light.[98] Here, as in other surrounding villages, the more religious citizens thought that the end of world was coming when they saw that the whole horizon to the southeast was one line of fire. It was a magnificent and at the same time an awe-inspiring spectacle.

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[97] Andreas, *History of Chicago*, II: 736, 758; Loesch, *Personal Experiences During the Great Chicago Fire*, 10.

[98] Musham, Notes on the Chicago Fire.

No study of the Chicago Fire can be complete without some reference to the fires of 1871 at Peshtigo, Wisconsin, and at Manistee and Holland, Michigan. The first two occurred at about 9:00 P.M. on Sunday, October 8, about the same hour that the cow kicked over the lamp in the O'Leary barn. The last named started at about 3:00 A.M. on the night of October 8-9.

Peshtigo was a lumber town. It is located on the river of that name, seven miles from Green Bay and about sixty miles south of Escanaba. The outlying parts of the town had been previously burned over but no danger was anticipated from the fires which the people knew were burning in the forests for some distance to the south and west. At about 8:00 P.M. a noise was heard, low at first but gradually increasing in volume, resembling the noise of several freight trains coming at full speed. The temperature rose rapidly and the air was ominously motionless. At 9:00 P.M. a rain of fire descended upon the little town with a tremendous roar, so suddenly that many people were unable to escape from their houses. The fire burned all night and when it passed, Peshtigo lay in ashes. It had been destroyed by what may be called a fire cyclone which started in a forest fire about eight miles to the southwest of the town, and moved northeast down the west shore of Green Bay for about thirty miles, burning a track about fifteen miles in width. At about the same time another fire cyclone, starting at Humboldt just south of the head of Green Bay, burned a path about ten miles in width and forty miles long, northeast to Big Sturgeon Bay on the east shore, cleaning up everything in its path—forests, homes, farms and settlements. About 750 people perished in these fires.

On the eastern shore of Lake Michigan, Manistee was practically wiped out by a forest fire which had been burning southwest of the town earlier on the same day. This fire during the early evening hours started moving to the northwest and struck the town about 9:00 P.M. When it passed, three-quarters of Manistee had been destroyed. Holland, Michigan, is also on the east shore of Lake Michigan, eighty-five miles directly northeast

of Chicago. A fire started at about 3:00 A.M., approximately six and a half hours after the start of the Chicago Fire and wiped it out in a few hours.

Features of these fires were what observers called "fire balloons," which were dark, round masses of smoke about the size of a large balloon and with which the sky appeared to be filled. These balloons would fall to the ground, burst and send forth a brilliant blaze of fire which would instantly consume everything in the neighborhood.[99] The wind also blew in wide whirls in a counter-clockwise direction. It is entirely probable that these fire balloons were fire devils, for they behaved in the same manner as fire devils would under the conditions of Peshtigo and Holland.

The shores of Lake Michigan were evidently the fire center of the country on the night of October 8-9. Four large, widely separated fires—at Chicago, Manistee and the two on Green Bay —all started about the same time. This is a startling coincidence. These fires were certainly not purposely set off at that hour. This being the case, there can be only one conclusion and that is that conditions at these locations were similar, and such as would be conducive to the formation of large fires. As far as combustible material is concerned, Peshtigo, Manistee, Holland, the woods about them, and Chicago were nothing but tinder boxes. This, while favorable for the spread of fire, does not explain why the course of these fires all ran to the north and the northeast.

An examination of the records of the United States Weather Offices at Chicago, Milwaukee, Escanaba, and Grand Haven on the east shore of Lake Michigan and at other points throughout the Middle West for a distance of 300 miles from Chicago, shows that October 8 opened with normal temperatures. As the day wore on the thermometer rose rapidly, far above normal for that season of the year, and it generally remained there for about the next thirty-six hours, the day and evening being unusually warm. There were no high winds blowing; in only a few instances did

[99] Musham, Notes on the Chicago Fire.

the wind reach thirty miles an hour and in most cases it was but a light breeze. The early hours of the night were very quiet.

The daily barometer reports for 7:35 A.M. were recorded as follows: October 7, the high barometer which was in the northwest had extended rapidly over the Mississippi and Ohio valleys, southeastward to the Blue Ridges. The probabilities were that the barometer would fall in the northwest. October 8, the low barometer in the extreme northwest had extended slowly eastward. The probabilities were that the barometer would fall from Lake Michigan westward. October 9, the low barometer which existed Sunday morning in the Missouri Valley had apparently advanced but very little eastward. October 10, the low barometer which was probably in central Nebraska Monday morning had apparently moved east into northern Illinois and northeast toward Lake Michigan.

There were not enough observation stations in existence in 1871 to determine the center of the low pressure area of 7:35 A.M. on October 7. The barometer as observed at Escanaba, Milwaukee, Chicago and Grand Haven read as follows:

REDUCED BAROMETER FOR OCTOBER 8, 1871

ESCANABA		MILWAUKEE		CHICAGO		GRAND HAVEN	
Time	Bar.	Time	Bar.	Time	Bar.	Time	Bar.
6:55 A.M.	29.93	7:35 A.M.	29.98	7:00 A.M.	30.06	7:35 A.M.	30.03
Change	−.17		−.20		−.17		−.13
3:55 P.M.	29.76	4:35 P.M.	29.78	4:00 P.M.	29.89	4:35 P.M.	29.90
Change	+.02		+.07		+.05		+.02
10:55 P.M.	29.78	11:35 P.M.	29.85	11:00 P.M.	29.94	11:35 P.M.	29.92

REDUCED BAROMETER FOR OCTOBER 9, 1871

ESCANABA		MILWAUKEE		CHICAGO[100]		GRAND HAVEN	
Time	Bar.	Time	Bar.	Time	Bar.	Time	Bar.
6:55 A.M.	29.72	6:52 A.M.	29.83	———	———	7:35 A.M.	29.92
Change	−.17		−.13				−.14
3:55 P.M.	29.65	3:52 P.M.	29.70	———	———	4:35 P.M.	29.78
Change	−.11		−.11				−.11
10:55 P.M.	29.54	10:52 P.M.	29.59	———	———	11:35 P.M.	29.69

[100] No observations. Weather office destroyed by fire.

This data shows that on the evening of October 8, there was a rapid falling of the barometer on the shores of Lake Michigan from Chicago north to Escanaba, which condition probably extended farther north. The low barometer went even lower on October 9, and on October 10 it stayed low until late in the day when it began to return to normal. It is evident that the low pressure area reported in the northwest moved east as predicted on the morning of October 8, and was near and over Lake Michigan on the evening of that day. It may be assumed from this condition that Lake Michigan was on the eastern slope of a low pressure area, or in the southeast quadrant of one, at the time these fires started. This, then, with the unusual rise in temperature during the day and the almost quiet condition of the air in the early evening, points to the conclusion that atmospheric conditions around Lake Michigan on the night of October 8-9 were favorable to the formation of convection whirls. Tornadoes could not occur as the cloud conditions favorable to their formation were non-existent. From all this the conclusion may be drawn that around the shores of Lake Michigan there exist at certain times during the year, certain meteorological conditions which are favorable to the creation of large destructive fires. These conditions may also occur in other parts of the country.

In Chicago, especially, conditions were right for the formation of a great fire other than those which the atmospheric conditions provided: a tinder box of a city built on a flat plain of large extent; a small inadequately equipped Fire Department with some of its apparatus out of service and its men exhausted from their work of the preceding twenty-four hours; an unreliable fire alarm system; delay and blunders in giving the alarm; and careless citizens. All that was needed to set the destructive train of circumstances in motion was a spark, and this was provided by the accidental kick of a restive cow which overturned and broke a lighted lamp in a stable. The result—the partial destruction of Chicago in about thirty hours.

THE FIRE DEPARTMENT

The Fire Department came in for a great deal of criticism, most of which was unwarranted. It was charged that the men were drunk, that competent direction was lacking, that some firemen took money for paying special attention to certain property, and that the department was inefficient in general.

As to the first charge, an examination of all the available information shows no basis for making such a charge. That some firemen did take a drink or two cannot be doubted. It was a hard drinking age—almost everybody drank either openly or on the quiet. There is no direct evidence that any fireman was drunk. All such statements are hearsay. If any of them conveyed that impression, it was because of their exhausted condition. It must be remembered that the entire department had worked steadily from 11:30 P.M. Saturday to 3:30 P.M. Sunday, fighting one of the toughest battles encountered up to that date. Several of the men were in very bad condition after the Saturday fire. Their faces had been scorched, their eyelids were raw, and they were sent home to rest. Some of them had only reached their quarters about an hour before they were called out to the Great Fire. As the fire progressed, some of them just "caved in" and may have stumbled around as if intoxicated. But the charge that firemen were drunk is most unfair and is certainly not borne out by the facts in the case.

As for there being a lack of executive control in handling the fire, it must be remembered that Marshal Williams had but fifteen fire engines and less than 185 men to fight a fire that started in a neighborhood which was nothing but a tinderbox. In the long official investigation by the Board of Police, there were only two firemen who criticized his work. One of them was Foreman Denis J. Swenie who lost his engine through failure to obey his chief's orders, and the other was Foreman F. T. Swenie of Pioneer Hook and Ladder Company No. 1, whose truck had been burned in the fire of Saturday night, and who personally disliked Williams. Foreman Denis J. Swenie stated at the hearing that there

was no plan of operations and that if he had been in charge he would have taken up a position along the river and stopped the fire at Franklin Street. He did not state which bank of the river he would have occupied, or where the men and apparatus were to come from with which to make his stand, or how he would have known just where the fire would strike the South Side, or how he would have handled the fires at Parmelee's stables, the gas works or Conley's Patch—all of which would have been two blocks to his rear and each of which was a good task for the entire department— or why his company and two others had not succeeded in keeping the relatively small fire at St. Paul's Church, one of the most critical points of the whole fire, from spreading into the Roelle factory and Bateham's mills. He apparently did not understand that if all of the apparatus had been moved to the South Side the fire on the West Side would have taken on a new lease of life and spreading to the south, west and north would have destroyed that entire section and with it most likely the whole city, and further that such a disposition of the companies would have so dispersed the Department as to render it almost useless. To have extinguished the fire after it struck the South Side was, under the circumstances, beyond the capacity of the Department and would have required many times the number of men and companies it had. Pipeman Conway who saw much of the fire from 11:00 P.M. on, stated at the hearing that he did not think the fire on the South Side could have been stopped unless the buildings were picked up and thrown into the lake.[101]

That there was no plan of operation such as is drawn up in military operations and which seldom works, is true, but it must be remembered that firemen do not know just where and when fires will occur. Plans for extinguishing them must be made on the ground, almost instantly, and it must be kept in mind that it takes time to place apparatus, lay and reel up hose lines and change position. The fire moved so fast at times that hose had to

[101] *Chicago Tribune,* Nov. 26, 1871.

be left in the streets to be burned. A study of such information as is available on the positions of the companies during the fire reveals the outline of what Marshal Williams was trying to do. He left enough apparatus on the West Side to hold the fire there and moved the greater part of it over to the South Side as fast as it was possible to get orders to the officers in charge. It must be remembered that the difficulties of communication were tremendous. The companies on the South Side were forced by the intense heat to make frequent withdrawals. As they changed positions they were kept constantly on the front, withdrawing to the south and west flanks as the fire reached the lake. Such of the engines as were in serviceable condition were so located when the fire ended and in these positions they had done good work. This was evidently Williams' plan of operations.

No criticism can be made of Marshal Williams personally. He was in front of the fire during its progress through the West Side and the business district. He was not left alone to handle matters as he saw fit, but was bothered by such amateur saviors of the city as Hildreth. When the waterworks burned and the water supply gave out there was very little the Department could do except work in limited areas along the river. Considering the fire in its entirety Williams' handling of it was all that could be expected. Extinguishing large fires by executive control from some central point cannot be done any more than a battle can be fought from a dugout. Firemen, like soldiers, fight best when their officers are with them on the line of battle.

The charge that the firemen demanded pay before they would attempt to save property is not true. Certain selfish men did offer money to them if they would direct their efforts to saving their property in preference to that of others. But in no case does it appear that it was accepted or that any favoritism was shown. Certain business concerns whose properties located on the south line of the fire at the South Branch were saved by the firemen, did make up a large purse afterwards, but they did it as a mark of their appreciation and not for any special services rendered.

The charge of inefficiency is disproved by the facts in the case. No time was lost in answering the alarm once the fire was sighted and the alarm given. A close examination of all accounts of the fire shows that the Little Giant Engine Company was the first company at the fire and that it answered the still alarm and went to work with commendable promptness. The bursting of the hose of Chicago No. 5, and the breaking down of the engine were indeed unfortunate accidents. The hose was probably old and the engine not in the best of condition due to its years of service and the slight damage sustained at the fire of the previous night. The Department had only a few hours between fires and there was not enough time to get the men or the equipment into shape for another such battle.

The third engine to arrive at the fire, Waubansia No. 2, evidently did not have steam up when it reached the fire. This was probably due to the long run it had to make to reach the fire or to a lack of fuel. The disabling of No. 5 and the inability of No. 2 to go to work promptly were the determining factors in the spread of the fire. Had they been capable of instant, sustained service on arrival at the fire, it would have been put out promptly and only a few frame houses, barns and sheds would have been destroyed. The situation was not yet hopeless when No. 5 was ready to go to work for the second time but this was impossible when it was found that there was no coal for the engine. This was clearly the fault of the foreman and the engineer.

There was still chance to stop the fire in its tracks when Foreman Musham of the Little Giant, with the aid of some citizens, put a second stream on the backs of the houses fronting on Taylor Street when they commenced to burn. But he was ordered back to other work by Marshal Benner, and the citizens dropped the nozzle and abandoned the hose, thereby throwing away this opportunity. This happened while No. 5 was still disabled and No. 2 was raising steam. As a consequence the fire cut through the row of houses and crossed Taylor Street. Foreman Musham stated afterwards that "the fire would have been put out then and

there if it had not been for the Marshal's orders." He further stated that "the fire should and could have been stopped in the block in which it started."[102]

There was still a possibility of stopping the fire while the two blocks were burning. Observers agree that Marshal Williams had the fire under control at this point. When St. Paul's Church took fire the situation was not altogether hopeless. Fiercely as the church burned, the three companies working on it should have been able to keep the fire from spreading to the Roelle factory and Bateham's mills. They failed, however, and the burning factory and mills forced Williams to disperse his forces. The burning of the church was therefore the most critical point in the fire. Even after the mills caught fire there was hope that the fire would be confined to the West Side, but this hope soon vanished with the carrying of brands across the river where the South Side was fired at three widely separated places. Even if the engines had been right on the spot when these new fires did occur it is not likely that they could have been extinguished, because the neighborhood in which they started was almost as bad a fire hazard as De Koven and Jefferson streets, and because the air must have been full of fire devils carrying burning brands forward in whirling masses of superheated air.

There is only one way to stop a fire devil and that is to prevent its formation. This can be done in the incipient stage by directing a large heavy stream of water at the ascending flame mass or above it, or as a water screen to cool the air and break up any whirls that may be forming. Such a stream can only be delivered by powerful fire boats or the very largest of land engines. Fortunate indeed is the city that has a water front which will permit the use of fire boats. Chicago had the water front but due to the shortsightedness and the penny-wise policy of the City Council it did not have the fire boats. The fire would probably have been confined to the West Side if the Department had had

[102] Musham, Notes on the Chicago Fire.

two fire boats. Two 3,000 gallon fire boats would have cost about $50,000. The Common Council saved $50,000 but the city lost $200,000,000.

The waterworks should not have burned. Adequate fire protection could have been provided by standpipe and fire plugs at the cost of a few thousand dollars. Further, all the buildings should have had metal roofs laid on metal trusses instead of slate roof on wooden trusses and sheathing. When the works burned and the engines stopped there was little the firemen could do. They were restricted to positions along the river, which they held until driven from them by the rapidly advancing flames.

Along the west and south fronts of the fire the Fire Department did good work. It saved the West Side and a large part of the South Side. With the help of three fire engines from Milwaukee it also saved several blocks on the North Side at the forks of the river.

It must be admitted, however, that the work of the fire alarm telegraph office was stupid indeed. Watchman Schaffer's blunder in locating the fire near Box 342 instead of 296 was bad enough. But Operator Brown's refusal to strike the proper box when asked to do so by Schaffer—because he thought that a nearer alarm would cause confusion—can be classed as nothing less than monumental stupidity.

The Board of Police in the Fire Department came in for a great deal of criticism, some of which was justified. It was charged that politics played a large part in its management of affairs. As the Board was an elective body this is most likely true, but when its reports for some years prior to the fire are studied, it is apparent that it was fully aware of the city's danger from fire, and of the inadequacy of the Fire Department. The Board did make recommendations to the Common Council to remedy these bad conditions. It did recommend the establishment of a building inspection bureau. It did recommend the building of fire boats. It did recommend increases in other equipment. These recommendations were not acted upon by the Common Council.

In all fairness the Board cannot be held responsible for the burning of the city.

The fire would have been extinguished in its earliest stages if: (a) the O'Learys or their neighbors had promptly turned in an alarm on the nearest fire alarm box; (b) the location of the fire had been correctly determined by Schaffer; (c) Brown had struck a nearer box when asked to do so by Schaffer; (d) Chicago Engine No. 5 had not become disabled right after starting work at the fire; (e) Waubansia Engine No. 2 had been able to work when it arrived at the fire; (f) Third Assistant Marshal Benner had not interfered with the second stream of the Little Giant.

THE CITY GOVERNMENT

There now remains but one factor in this great catastrophe that must be considered and that is the city government. The Common Council failed to do its duty. The Mayor and aldermen knew full well that the city was nothing but a tinderbox and that the construction of its buildings was faulty to the extreme. They had full knowledge of the danger from fire that the city was exposed to, from the great fires it had suffered in recent years. Yet they neglected to provide a fire department, adequately manned and sufficiently equipped, to cope with any fire that could occur. They further failed to enact a building code that would eliminate faulty construction and fire hazards, and ordinances that would stop the leasing of street ends and their occupation without permission. The city government cannot be said to have been very efficient but at that it was no worse than other municipal governments of that period. It is very easy to blame the administration for such catastrophes as the Chicago Fire but it must be kept in mind that the people put the officials in power. In the last analysis, the people of Chicago were to blame for the destruction of their city by fire, for knowing full well the danger to which it was exposed, they failed to prohibit the construction of highly inflammable buildings.

MAP SHOWING PROGRESS OF THE FIRE

0 — 1/4 — 1/2 — 3/4 — 1.

ONE MILE

FIRE.		TIME OF STARTING.
A.	O'Leary Barn.	8.30 to 8.45 p.m, October 8.
B.	Bateham's Mills.	10.00 " " 8.
C.	Parmelee's Stables.	11.30 " " 8.
D.	Gas Works.	12.00 midnight " 8-9.
	Conley's Patch.	12.20 a.m. " 9.
E.	Court House.	1.30 " " 9.
F.	Wright's Stables.	2.30 " " 9.
G.	Polk Street.	2.30 " " 9.
H.	Northwestern Elevator.	7.00 " " 9.
I.	Galena Elevator.	7.00 " " 9.

1. The Red Flash.
2. Goll's drugstore.
3. St. Paul's Church.
4. Pittsburgh, Fort Wayne and Chicago depot.
5. Armory.
6. Union National Bank.
7. Nixon Block.
8. Lill's paint shop.
9. Chicago Dock Company warehouses.
10. Grand Pacific Hotel.
11. Chamber of Commerce.
12. Bigelow House.
13. Honore Block.
14. Shepherd Block.
15. Post Office and Customhouse.
16. Reynolds Block.
17. Rock Island depot.
18. Tribune Building.
19. Rumsey residence.
20. Waterworks.
21. Lill's brewery.
22. Galena elevator.
23. Milwaukee Railroad depot.
24. Chicago and Northwestern depot.
25. Holy Name Cathedral.
26. Ogden school.
27. Sherman Hotel.
28. Hooley's Opera House.
29. Wood's Museum.
30. Matteson House.
31. Tremont House.
32. Lind Block.
33. Marine Hospital.
34. Illinois Central depot.
35. Elevator A.
36. Elevator B.
37. Lake House.
38. McCormick Harvester works.
39. Bath house.
40. North Pier.
41. Palmer House.
42. McVickers Theatre.
43. Chicago and Northwestern depot (Galena branch).
44. Booksellers' Row.
45. Field and Leiter store.
46. Wabash Avenue Methodist Episcopal Church.
47. Oriental flour mills.
48. Nelson elevator.
49. Terrace Row.

APPENDIX A

ROSTER OF CHICAGO FIRE DEPARTMENT[103]

AT HEADQUARTERS: R. A. Williams, fire marshal; John Schank, first ass't.; Lorenz Walters, second ass't.; Matthias Benner, third ass't.; Hiram Amick, clerk; Gustavas Haenisch, fire warden. North Division: Wagon No. 1, Ambrose N. Wilson; No. 2, Geo. W. Weller; No. 3, Chas. Evans; No. 4, Albin C. King. Supply Truck: John Toner, hose cleaner; Matthias Schaffer and Denis Deneen, watchmen on old court-house tower.

FIRE ALARM TELEGRAPH: E. B. Chandler, superintendent; John P. Barrett, chief operator; Geo. Fuller, John F. Stevans, operators; John Kennedy, Frederick W. Gund, Wm. J. Brown, repairers.

STEAMER LONG JOHN NO. 1: Alex McMonagle, foreman; Geo. W. Wagner, Andrew Coffey, Wm. Flannery, Francis H. Butterfield, pipemen; Wm. G. Hendrickson, watchman; Michael Kennedy, Wm. E. Hand, drivers; Joseph L. Gilbert, stoker; Timothy A. Moynihan, engineer.

STEAMER WAUBANSIA NO. 2: Michael Sullivan, foreman; Frederick Allen, engineer; Michael Geimer, Peter Phelan, Theo. Lagger, pipemen; Isaac M. Adler, William Otto, drivers; William McIntyre, stoker; Patrick Kearns, watchman.

STEAMER WILLIAM JAMES NO. 3: John McLean, foreman; Chas. S. Petrie, engineer; John Michael, stoker; Henry Anderson, Rollin G. Hannon, pipemen; Casper A. Charleston, watchman; Jas. McNamara, George G. Seeber, drivers.

STEAMER JACOB REHM NO. 4: Gottfried Carlson, foreman; John Doyle, engineer; Charles Osborne, stoker; Lewis Lawson, Lorenz Schmidt, Geo. L. Taylor, pipemen; Adam Breit, Frederick Varges, drivers; Olaf C. Johnson, watchman.

STEAMER CHICAGO NO. 5: Christian Schimmels, foreman; Michael W. Conway, David B. Kenyon, Henry Welch, Conrad Ruhl, pipemen; Jas. McClellan, Chas. H. Emery, drivers; Henry V. Coleman, engineer; Chas. Schroeder, stoker; Ira Mix, watchman.

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[103] By courtesy of William C. Freitag.

STEAMER LITTLE GIANT NO. 6: William Musham, foreman; John Campion, Frank R. Howard, Michael Dolan, pipemen; Wm. S. Dunham, engineer; Jos. Lagger, stoker; John Windheim, Calvin L. Cole, drivers; Joseph Lauf, watchman.

STEAMER LIBERTY NO. 7: Benjamin Rice, engineer; reserve engine.

STEAMER ECONOMY NO. 8: Nicholas Dubach, foreman; John C. Cooney, engineer; Wallace T. Phelps, stoker; Anthony Lagger, Nicholas Lewis, Joseph Stolz, John Cook, pipemen; Richard Stringer, John Mergenthaler, drivers; Chas. Schank, watchman.

STEAMER FRANK SHERMAN NO. 9: Joel A. Kinney, foreman; John Hohn, engineer; George Leady, stoker; Arthur E. Slocum, Claudius Blair, drivers; John M. Reis, John Fitzgerald, Christian Goodwin, pipemen; Thomas Sanderson, watchman.

STEAMER J. B. RICE NO. 10: Jas. J. Walsh, foreman; Levi A. Forester, engineer; Daniel H. O'Brien, stoker; Wm. H. Townsend, Jas. A. Donegan, drivers; Joseph Burkhardt, Edwin Roberts, Patrick J. Ryan, Richard Fitzgerald, pipemen; John Huhn, watchman.

STEAMER A. C. COVENTRY NO. 11: Lawrence J. Walsh, foreman; John Lauf, Frederick Reis, Herman Baer, Daniel D. Healy, pipemen; Francis R. Souersby, engineer; Chas. H. Ripley, stoker; John J. McClellan, Cornelius Casey, drivers; Thos. Melvin, watchman.

STEAMER T. B. BROWN NO. 12: Frederick W. Taplin, foreman; Joseph C. Pazen, Jas. Cuddy, Jos. Casserly, pipemen; Chas. Pratt, Horace N. Ward, drivers; John E. Ferguson, engineer; George R. Lathrop, stoker; Michael S. Taplin, watchman.

STEAMER A. D. TITSWORTH NO. 13: Maurice W. Shay, foreman; Alfred W. Pendleton, Peter Trainer, Francis B. Lane, Thos. Canty, pipemen; John H. Manning, engineer; William Olwell, stoker; Myron Crum, Daniel Reardon, drivers; Alexander Reynolds, watchman.

STEAMER FRED GUND NO. 14: Denis J. Swenie, foreman; Francis Paquin, Aaron Jansen, Nicholas Weinand, William Hoisington, pipemen; John Farrell, watchman; John Berry, engineer; Edward Kaiser, stoker; Peter Schnur, Dan Daly, drivers.

STEAMER ILLINOIS NO. 15: William Mullin, foreman; John Meyers, John O'Day, pipeman; Francis Berry, engineer; James Kingswell, stoker; Norman T. Ormbsy, driver.

STEAMER WINNEBAGO NO. 16: John Dreher, foreman; James F. Enright, engineer; Patrick Crowley, stoker; James Philips, driver; Wm. Phillipi, James Young, pipemen.

STEAMER R. A. WILLIAMS NO. 17: Chas. T. Brown, foreman; John Cook, Arthur J. Calder, Daniel Toomey, Edward Ferris, pipemen; Thad Healy, engineer; John C. Stickler, stoker; David Hyland, Patrick Lamey, drivers; Daniel O'Connell, watchman.

PIONEER HOOK AND LADDER NO. 1: Francis T. Swenie, foreman; Chas. Miller, Francis Flannigan, John Gleason, Patrick Dignan, truckmen; Geo. H. Dorsett, driver.

PROTECTION HOOK AND LADDER NO. 2: Geo. H. Rau, foreman; Hugo Franzen, Lewis Fiene, Adam Cook, Patrick Murtaugh, truckmen; James M. Houser, driver.

RESCUE HOOK AND LADDER NO. 3: John H. Green, foreman; William Freise, Thos. Maxwell, Chas. M. Duffy, Jas. Duff, truckmen; Norman N. Holt, driver.

HOOK AND LADDER NO. 4: Geo. Ernst, foreman; Edwin Roberts, Jos. O'Donohue, Henry H. Breternetz, truckmen; Isaac G. Hallock, driver.

TEMPEST HOSE NO. 1: Leo Meyers, foreman; Paul Ditt, John George, hosemen; John Fowler, driver.

AMERICA HOSE NO. 2: John Dorsey, foreman; David Manwell, hoseman; Chas. A. Anderson, driver.

JOHN A. HUCK HOSE NO. 3: Matthew Schuh, foreman; George Steurnegel, Jos. Freitch, hosemen; Peter Lawson, driver.

LINCOLN HOSE NO. 4: John C. Schmidt, foreman; Edward Varges, hoseman; John Harden, driver.

WASHINGTON HOSE NO. 5: James J. Grant, foreman; Reuben A. Bunnel, hoseman; Patrick Garrity, driver.

DOUGLAS HOSE NO. 6: Thos. Barry, foreman; Geo. H. Idell, hoseman; Eugene Sullivan, driver.

HOSE ELEVATOR NO. 2: James Enright, foreman; Frank W. Locke, Thomas Ryan, truckmen; Thomas Byrnd, driver.

INSURANCE PATROL NO. 1: B. B. Bullwinkle, F. J. Gabriel, D. F. Donnelly, C. C. Donnelly, C. G. Emory, John Cochran, Thomas Soden, William Gough, Thomas Woodworth, William Atkins.

APPENDIX B

APPARATUS OF THE CHICAGO FIRE DEPARTMENT IN 1871[104]

ENGINE COMPANIES

NAME OF COMPANY	TYPE OF ENGINE AND LOCATION
Long John No. 1	Second class rotary, Silsby; drawn by 2 horses. In service 1 year, 8 months, on October 8, 1871. 121-123 S. LaSalle St., on east side of street about 175 feet north of Madison St.
Waubansia No. 2	Second class rotary, Silsby; drawn by 2 horses. In service 2 years, 9 months. Sanger between McGregor and 25th sts., about 125 feet south of Archer on east side of street, on corner of alley.
William James No. 3	Second class piston, Amoskeag; drawn by 4 horses. In service 3 years, 10 months. In shop on October 8 for repairs. 235 West Chicago Ave., on south side of street, about 50 feet west of May St.
Jacob Rehm No. 4	Second class piston, Amoskeag; drawn by 2 horses. In service 3 years, 10 months. 409 Larrabee St. on west side of street, corner of North Ave.
Chicago No. 5	Second class rotary, Silsby; drawn by 2 horses. In service 3 years. 197 S. Jefferson St. on east side of street, south of Van Buren St.
Little Giant No. 6	First class rotary, with piston engine with rotary pump, Amoskeag; drawn by 4 horses. In service 11 years, 6 months. 147 Maxwell St. on south side of street between Jefferson and Clinton sts.

[104] *Report of Board of Police*, 1870, 1872.

Liberty No. 7	Second class piston, Amoskeag; drawn by 2 horses. In service 10 years and 6 months; relief engine, in shop. 80 W. Lake St. (new number 558) on North side of street at northwest corner of alley between Jefferson and Clinton sts.
Economy No. 8	Second class piston, Amoskeag; drawn by 2 horses. In service 9 years, 11 months. 16 Archer Ave., on south side of street about 25 feet from corner of Dearborn St.
Frank Sherman No. 9	First class piston, Amoskeag; drawn by 4 horses. In service 6 years. 173 Cottage Grove Ave. near 25th St.
J. B. Rice No. 10	First class piston, Amoskeag; drawn by 4 horses. In service 6 years. 338 South State St. on west side of street, between Congress and Harrison sts.
A. C. Coventry No. 11	First class piston, Amoskeag; drawn by 4 horses. In service 5 years, 8 months. 225 Michigan St. on north side of street about 80 feet east of State St.
T. B. Brown No. 12	First class piston, Amoskeag; drawn by 4 horses. In service 5 years, 11 months. 611 W. Lake St. on south side of street about 160 feet east of Paulina St.
A. D. Titsworth No. 13	Second class piston, Amoskeag; drawn by 2 horses. In service 4 years, 8 months. 97 Dearborn St., on east side of street about 36 feet north of Madison St.
Fred Gund No. 14	Second class piston, Amoskeag; drawn by 2 horses. In service 1 year, 10 months. 36-38 Chicago Ave. on south side of street about 100 feet west of Kingsbury St.

Illinois No. 15	Third class rotary, Silsby; drawn by 2 horses. In service 1 year, 10 months. 308 West 22nd St., on north side of street about 75 feet west of May St.
Winnebago No. 16	Third class rotary, Silsby; drawn by 2 horses. In service 1 year, 10 months. 31st St. and Burnside Ave.
R. A. Williams No. 17	Second class piston, L. Button and Son, Waterford. In service 1 year, 8 months. 80 West Lake St. on north side of street on northwest corner of alley between Jefferson and Clinton sts.

CAPACITIES OF ENGINES

First class Amoskeag	900	gallons	per	minute
Second " "	600	"	"	"
First class Silsby	850	"	"	"
Second " "	700	"	"	"
Third " "	600	"	"	"

HOOK AND LADDER COMPANIES

Pioneer No. 1	121 LaSalle Street, on east side of street, about 175 feet north of Madison, in same house as Long John Engine Company No. 1.
Protection No. 2	195 South Jefferson St., in same house as Chicago Engine Company No. 5.
Rescue No. 3	86 West Erie St.
No. 4	Sanger St. near McGregor St.

HOSE ELEVATOR COMPANIES

Hose Elevator No. 1	Not in use.
Hose Elevator No. 2	205 Washington St., on northeast corner of Franklin and Washington sts.

HOSE COMPANIES

Tempest No. 1	On northwest corner of W. Washington and Clinton sts.
America No. 2	31 Blue Island, on west side of street about 100 feet north of Gurley St.
John Huck No. 3	180 North Dearborn St., on west side of street between Superior and Huron sts.
Lincoln No. 4	554 Webster Ave., on north side of street east of Larrabee.
Washington No. 5	1004 West Madison St.
Douglas No. 6	603 Cottage Grove Ave.

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Fire Insurance Patrol No. 1	In alley in block bounded by Monroe, Dearborn, Adams and Clark sts. Not a part of the Fire Department but under the control of the Chicago Board of Underwriters.

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OFFICIAL PROCEEDINGS
1940

REPORT OF THE SECRETARY ILLINOIS STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

To the Directors and Members of the Illinois State Historical Society:

Ladies and Gentlemen:

I present herewith a summary of the activities of the Illinois State Historical Society since the last annual meeting on May 13, 1939.

I take pleasure in stating that the Society's membership stands at 918—a small gain over last year. This gain was made in spite of an unusually large number of deaths during the year—twenty-six—and also in spite of forty resignations and cancellations for non-payment of dues. More than offsetting these losses were the 105 members admitted during the year.

The Society's present membership is within easy striking distance of 1,000, a figure which I should like to see reached before the end of the year, and signalized by the publication of the membership list. The Secretary will continue the routine promotional activities which have produced most of the recent membership increases, but membership work on the part of individual members—always highly effective—would aid in the speedy achievement of this very modest goal. If the State Historical Society of Missouri, with less to offer its members than we offer ours, can attain a membership of more than 2,000, surely we should have no difficulty in achieving a goal one-half that size.

During the past year the publications of the Society have continued to attract favorable notice. *Papers in Illinois History, 1938,* was reviewed very favorably in the *Mississippi Valley Historical Review,* while the *Journal* has been the subject of frequent comment and commendation in Illinois newspapers. For example, in the *Decatur Herald* for April 24, 1940, Sam Tucker's column, "As I View the Thing," was devoted entirely to the article, "The Charleston Riot, March 28, 1864," by Coleman and Spence in the

March issue of the *Journal.* In the *Mt. Morris Index,* January 19, 1940, appeared a long summary of Joseph I. Lambert's article, "The Black Hawk War: A Military Analysis," from the December, 1939, number; while a shorter summary of the same article was published in the *Rock Island Argus* for January 6. Several papers in Lee and De Kalb counties noticed Frank E. Stevens' article, "Hazelwood, Its Master and Its Coterie," from our September, 1939, issue, while the Secretary's appreciation of Mr. Stevens in the December number was widely quoted in this region. Many other examples could be cited to prove the extensive use of our publications by the newspapers of the state.

In part, newspaper use of our publications is unprompted; in part it is the result of our own effort to publicize the Society and its work. Our publications go regularly to most newspapers of the State. If the *Journal,* let us say, contains an article of particular interest to Madison County, special letters calling attention to that article are sent to the editors of all papers in the vicinity. Good publicity almost invariably results.

In addition, special articles are occasionally prepared for the press, and either sent out directly or given to the press services. For example, a story calling attention to the anniversary of Illinois statehood on December 3 was widely used. The reception accorded this and other stories indicates that more publicity material of the same kind would be welcomed by editors. During the forthcoming year more attention will be paid to this phase of the Society's work.

Before leaving the subject of our publications, I regret the necessity of announcing that the publication of *Papers in Illinois History, 1939* has been delayed at the request of the Department of Finance. It is hoped that funds will soon be available, and that the book can be distributed during the early summer.

A year ago at this time I called your attention to the publicity possibilities present in radio. No action was taken, but an investigation of the field was authorized. That investigation revealed that dramatizations were the most effective type of his-

torical programs. It also showed that while radio stations were willing to donate time, the cost of scripts, actors and music for thirteen programs—the usual number—would run into four figures, and would thus be prohibitive.

Sometime later I learned that the University of Illinois Radio Station WILL would be interested in a program such as that which we were contemplating, and that with that station there would be no charge for time, actors or music. The only cost would be for scripts. When approached, Mr. Josef Wright, manager of WILL, was enthusiastic. Through him, I made tentative arrangements with an experienced writer, Mr. George Jennings of the Radio Council, Chicago Public Schools, for scripts at $25 each —a very modest charge. The Board of Directors was then polled by mail, and with one exception, indicated approval of a program of this kind.

The first broadcast of the series took place on Tuesday, February 6, at 4:30 P.M.; and half-hour programs have followed at weekly intervals. The series will conclude with a broadcast on the founding of the University of Illinois, June 4. In addition to Station WILL, radio stations at Danville and Quincy have used recordings of the programs.

From the standpoint of conception and performance, the series has been an excellent one. Subjects were chosen and historical material was assembled by the Secretary. Mr. Jennings then prepared the script, which was scrutinized for accuracy before being sent to the station. As far as I know, no broadcast has been criticized for its departure from historical fact. Production and acting have both been very good, and the scripts have been characterized as outstanding.

From the standpoint of popular response, however, the series has been somewhat disappointing. We are sending narratives of the broadcasts to seventy people, a relatively small number. We can attribute some memberships to the program, but not more, I think, than eight or ten. Obviously, if the series is to be judged from its immediate results, it has been unsuccessful. More in-

tensive publicity might have increased its effectiveness, but for that time was simply not available.

Individual listeners, however, have been enthusiastic. A minister writes from Savanna: "I have announced this series of broadcasts several times, and have persuaded one of our elementary school teachers, Miss Mary Long, to join the Society." A listener in Grayville comments: "These [broadcasts] should be continued, if at all possible, as an aid to the youth of this state, who may not appreciate to the fullest their glorious heritage." A Champaign business man indicates the educational possibilities of the program:

> I'm glad to take a moment to express appreciation for the "Historic Illinois" programs and the mimeographed digests I have received. The digests make up for the few programs I have been unable to hear. They are well selected so as to be of general interest. The radio presentations seem to me to be well dramatized and effectively presented.
>
> About the time of your story about the Mormons, my wife discovered the article in the *Reader's Digest* on the same subject. She told me quite a bit about the Mormons, but she soon found that I was up-to-date on Mormons too. The digests about the early explorers have been of interest to my children as they have been able to trace the early trips on the map and have learned something of geography in this way. I am trying to use each digest in connection with maps so that my children will be able to visualize the territory discussed and will build up a background in case we are able to take motor trips to historic points. I sincerely hope that you can continue the programs and digests.

If these letters are at all representative of a sizable body of listeners, then this program may be worth while in spite of the absence of tangible, immediate benefits. I have long believed that a state historical society is neglecting one of its greatest opportunities—perhaps I should say dodging one of its heaviest responsibilities—if it does not do what it can in the way of general popular education. In that belief I am not alone. Recently a committee of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania surveyed that

institution's record and charted its future course. Among other things the committee, which had as one member the Executive Secretary of the American Historical Association, agreed:

> With respect to the Society's obligations to the community as a whole as differentiated from its obligations to the world of historical scholarship, the Society has a responsibility for disseminating historical information as well as a duty of advancing the frontiers of knowledge; that this duty could be met with dignity without sacrificing intellectual standards; that popularization of knowledge need not necessarily be vulgarization; that this objective might be achieved by popular types of lectures, by radio dramatizations, and possibly by popular historical publications, all of which would be likely to result in increased interest in and support of the Society.

A man as well informed as Archibald MacLeish, Librarian of Congress, believes that unless we succeed in making the United States better aware of the significance of its own past, the consequence may be national disaster. The address from which I quote below was directed towards libraries, but it applies equally well to historical societies:

> We face a situation which has an "either" and which has an "or," and we will choose or fail to choose between them. Whichever we do, we will have chosen. For the failure to choose in the world we live in is itself a choice.
>
> The "either," as I see it, is the education of the people of this country. The "or" is fascism. We will either educate the people of this Republic to know, and therefore to value and therefore to preserve their own democratic culture, or we will watch the people of this Republic trade their democratic culture for the nonculture, the obscurantism, the superstition, the brutality, the tyranny which is overrunning eastern and central and southern Europe.

From this point of view, the Society's radio program—and any other of its activities in popular education—may well be worth the cost. In any case, the matter should receive consideration in the near future. Plans for next year should be made well in advance if maximum effectiveness is to be achieved.

This whole subject is much more important than the point at issue—the continuance or discontinuance of a radio program. The time may be at hand when our Society could profit by an appraisal of its activities and a statement of future policy. Two courses are clearly indicated. It may confine itself to occasional meetings and to its customary publications, emphasizing in both scholarship and contributions to historical knowledge. Or it may set itself the larger goal of public education, shaping its programs and publications so that they will have at least some popular appeal, devising other publications intended for a larger audience, utilizing the radio and if possible the motion picture for this purpose.

In recent years the Society's trend has been in the latter direction. The publications—particularly the *Journal*—are edited with one eye on the general public. Popular publications have been advocated repeatedly, but for various reasons, none has been published. Now, in radio, a new field is opening. In my opinion, the time has come for deciding whether this trend is sound and desirable. If it is, more can be done; if it isn't, the Society can easily revert to the traditional methods of collecting and disseminating Illinois historical materials.

Parenthetically, I may say that the orthodox, routine management of a historical society is incomparably the easier course for the executives of the organization. My own preference, however, is strongly for an adventurous policy. Like the men who formulated the Pennsylvania report already quoted, I believe "that popularization of knowledge need not necessarily be vulgarization," and I also believe that the state society which does not attempt to make some return to the general public is serving poorly the people who support it.

Regardless of what your decision as to policy may be, I believe serious consideration should be given to the revision of the Society's constitution. I understand that a resolution limiting the services of President and Vice President is to be presented to the Board of Directors. Perhaps it would be advisable to consider the incorporation of a limitation in the constitution itself. For

many years the President of the Society was elected by the membership instead of by the Board of Directors; a provision to this effect might be considered. It would be advisable, I think, to work out some integral relationship between the Society and local historical societies. This might take the form of standards which, when met, would permit affiliation with the State Society, and affiliation could signify certain privileges for the affiliated group. It is possible that a combination membership, with obvious advantages to all concerned, could be devised. The subject seems to me to be important enough to justify thorough examination.

The Treasurer's report, with the report of your auditing committee, will be presented to the Board of Directors. Here I shall do no more than state that the Society's funds, which totalled $5,761.02 on May 11, 1939, stood at $6,012.78 on May 11, 1940. Of this sum, $3,750 is invested in United States Treasury Bonds; the balance is on deposit at the Springfield Marine Bank and the First National Bank of Springfield.

The official activities of the Secretary in the past year may be worth noting. I have spoken before the Rock Island County Historical Society, the Morgan County Historical Society, the Evanston Historical Society, and on two occasions before the Southern Illinois Historical Society. I have also addressed the history students of Northwestern University, the student body of Knox College, the Springfield Community School for Adults, and the Bloomington Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution. I have contributed articles on Illinois history and the Illinois State Historical Library to the *Illinois Blue Book, 1939-1940;* and articles to three other state publications, as well as historical data for various addresses by officials of the state. During the past year I read all proofs of the Federal Writers' publication, *Illinois: A Descriptive and Historical Guide;* and have continued to serve as a member of the Advisory Council of *The Dictionary of American History.*

May I call your attention to the fact that the terms of the following members of the Board of Directors expire at this time:

Paul M. Angle, Carl E. Black, Theodore C. Pease, George C. Dixon and Clint Clay Tilton.

I regret the necessity of announcing the death, during 1939-1940, of the following members of the Society:

Robert S. Abbott.....Chicago
Samuel Alschuler .....Chicago
Henry F. Antes.....Chicago
A. P. Armington.....Dixon
Romanzo Norton Bunn.....Ellenburg, Wash.
John M. Cameron .....Chicago
Jay L. Cannon.....Fithian
Mrs. Etta Havens Carrithers.....Hudson
Charles S. Deneen.....Chicago
Clarence Griggs .....Ottawa
Harrison S. Kerrick.....Chicago
Kenneth McCullough.....San Francisco, Cal.
Henry Misostow .....Chicago
John O. Morrissey .....Bloomington
Mrs. Honore Willsie Morrow.....New York, N. Y.
John T. Mountain .....Glencoe
James H. Paddock.....Springfield
Isaac Pearson .....Newark, N. J.
J. Nick Perrin.....Belleville
L. H. Pratt .....Pekin
Mrs. H. M. Price.....Dixon
J. W. Putnam.....Indianapolis, Ind.
Wallace Rice .....Chicago
Lawrence Y. Sherman.....Daytona Beach, Fla.
Frank E. Stevens.....Springfield
Dr. Clarence A. Wells.....Quincy

Respectfully submitted,

PAUL M. ANGLE.

ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING ILLINOIS STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY CARBONDALE, ILLINOIS, MAY 10, 1940

A quorum being present, President James called the meeting to order. The minutes of the last annual meeting were read by the Secretary, and approved by unanimous vote.

The Secretary presented his report for the year 1939-1940, which was approved and made the order of business.

President James commented on various matters dealt with in the Secretary's report, stressing the Society's accomplishments in publicity by radio, its increase in membership, and its general success in all phases of its activity.

The nomination of Directors being declared in order, the following were placed in nomination: Richard L. Beyer, Carbondale, by Mr. East; Willard R. Matheny, Chicago, by Mr. Stevens; Theodore C. Pease, Urbana, by Mr. Miller; Clint Clay Tilton, Danville, by Mr. Beyer; George C. Dixon, Dixon, by Mr. Townley. On motion of Mr. Miller, seconded by Mr. Smith, the nominations were closed. The Secretary cast a unanimous ballot for the nominees, and the President declared them duly elected.

Mr. Miller commented on the fact that it was difficult to measure the Society's influence by the number of its members or by any numerical standard. He was convinced that its influence went far beyond those in immediate touch with its activities.

At the request of the President, Mr. Beyer described the formation of the Southern Illinois Historical Society and its work to date. Mr. Matheny commented on the activities of the Fort Dearborn Memorial Commission, and Dr. James described his own work in connection with the proposed Revolutionary War memorial to be erected by the Chicago Park District. Dr. Royal S. Van de Woestyne, director of the Illinois Historical Records Survey, expressed the hope that the Survey and the Society would

extend their co-operation to their mutual advantage.

On motion of Mr. East, seconded by Mr. Stevens, the following resolutions were adopted:

> WHEREAS, the forty-first annual meeting of the Illinois State Historical Society at Carbondale, Giant City State Park, and Cairo has equalled or surpassed similar meetings in recent years in the quality of the program, in attendance and in hospitality, and
>
> WHEREAS, the complete co-operation of the officers and members of the Southern Illinois Historical Society and of the faculty and administration of the Southern Illinois Normal University has contributed largely to this success, therefore, be it
>
> *Resolved,* That the Illinois State Historical Society here express and also record in its minutes its appreciation and thanks to the organizations mentioned and as well to the charming people of this community for a most enjoyable and profitable annual meeting.[1]

On motion of Mr. Matheny, seconded by Mr. East, Dr. Evarts B. Greene of New York, one of the founders of the Illinois State Historical Society, was elected to honorary membership.

After declaring that he would not be a candidate for re-election, and stating that he believed the best interests of the Society would be served by shorter presidential incumbencies, the President appointed a nominating committee consisting of Messrs. Stevens, Townley and Randall, and asked the committee to report to the ensuing meeting of the Directors. The annual meeting then adjourned.

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[1] These resolutions were adopted at sessions of the Society held at Giant City State Park and at Cairo, but are recorded as part of the proceedings of the annual meeting.

MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS ILLINOIS STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY CARBONDALE, ILLINOIS, MAY 10, 1940

Present: Messrs. James, Stevens, Clark, Randall, Townley, Beyer, Matheny, East, Secretary Angle, and Vice President Smith.

After discussion, it was moved by Mr. Stevens, seconded by Mr. Matheny, and passed that the President be directed to appoint a committee to work with the Secretary in proposing any amendments to the constitution which, after investigation, might seem to be advisable.

The Secretary announced that the invitation extended by Aurora for the meeting in 1941 had been withdrawn. President James read a communication from Earl W. Hayter of the Northern Illinois Normal University inviting the Society, on behalf of that institution, to hold the 1941 meeting in De Kalb. On motion of Mr. East, seconded by Mr. Townley, the selection of a place for the 1941 meeting was left to a committee consisting of the President, first Vice President and Secretary.

The Secretary presented the financial report for the year 1939-1940, together with the report of the auditing committee. On motion of Mr. Beyer, seconded by Mr. Matheny, both reports were accepted. Mr. Matheny then moved that the Secretary's recommendation that the Secretary be bonded in the amount of $5,000 and his assistant in the amount of $1,000 be accepted, and that the premiums on the bonds be paid by the society. Mr. Townley seconded the motion, which was passed.

Mr. Randall moved that the Society make its customary $50 contribution to the publication, *Writings in American History*. The motion was seconded by Mr. East, and passed.

The Secretary proposed the following budget for the year 1940-1941:

Historical markers	$150.00
Expense of meetings	200.00
Secretary's salary	750.00
Temporary assistants	100.00
Radio expense	200.00
Miscellaneous expense	300.00
	$1700.00

On motion of Mr. Matheny, seconded by Mr. East, this budget was approved, with the proviso that the President was authorized to spend an additional amount not to exceed $500 for promotional purpose with the unanimous consent of a policy committee, if such a committee is appointed.

The President then called for the report of the nominating committee. In presenting that report, Mr. Stevens expressed on behalf of the members of the Society, the universal affection and esteem existing for President James, and also the deep appreciation for his leadership during the past five years. The committee recommended the following nominations:

President	Clint Clay Tilton
First Vice President	John H. Hauberg
Vice Presidents	Ernest E. East
	Theodore C. Pease
	George W. Smith
	Wayne C. Townley
Secretary-treasurer	Paul M. Angle

On motion of Mr. Beyer, seconded by Mr. East, the report of the committee was accepted, and the President was directed to cast the vote of the Directors for the nominees, which was done.

Mr. Tilton expressed his gratitude for the honor conferred upon him.

The meeting then adjourned.

THE ILLINOIS STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

OFFICERS, 1940-1941

Clint Clay Tilton, *President*
John H. Hauberg, *Vice President*
Ernest E. East, *Vice President*
Theodore C. Pease, *Vice President*
George W. Smith, *Vice President*
Wayne C. Townley, *Vice President*
Paul M. Angle, *Secretary-Treasurer*

DIRECTORS

Oliver R. Barrett, *Kenilworth*
Richard L. Beyer, *Carbondale*
Dwight F. Clark, *Evanston*
George C. Dixon, *Dixon*
Ernest E. East, *Peoria*
Mrs. Henry English, *Jacksonville*
John H. Hauberg, *Rock Island*
Logan Hay, *Springfield*
James A. James, *Evanston*
Willard R. Matheny, *Chicago*
Theodore C. Pease, *Urbana*
James G. Randall, *Urbana*
Jewell F. Stevens, *Chicago*
Clint Clay Tilton, *Danville*
Wayne C. Townley, *Bloomington*

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